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RIFLE REVIEW

ALPHA MALE

Daystate's
Wolf goes
on Safari



ISSUE 173

HUNTING

THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOURS

The hide's built, so let's shoot

PISTOL TEST

SINGLE-ACTION SUCCESS

Get a grip on the Schofield from ASG

FIELD TEST

THE FINAL FRONTIER?

Hawke LRF: two devices in one



RIFLE REVIEW

A STING IN THE TAIL

BSA's new Scorpion TS tested





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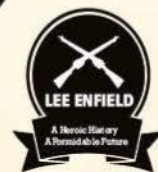
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The "Brothers in Arms" series of replica, iconic 20th century, weapons, is produced for Lee-Enfield (Guns) Ltd, to honour the combatants of all nationalities, who fought and died in dreadful conflicts, in the world's bloodiest century.

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AIRGUN SHOOTER

ISSUE 173

SCAN TO GET
OUR WEEKLY
NEWSLETTER



MEET THE TEAM

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

PHILL PRICE

PHILL has a 40-year plus airgun hunting career. He's been part of the industry for over a decade and has plenty of inside knowledge.



CONTRIBUTOR

ANDY McLACHLAN

ANDY is the man to help you get a competitive edge. While he's happy shooting HFT, he's been taking on benchrest lately as well.



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& SAVE
PAGE 34



AIRGUNS FOR ALL

AIRGUN shooters are a blessed bunch because we have something that's of immense value – freedom of choice. We can enjoy our sport with a fairly limited budget, but if we are able to afford it, we can enjoy a marvel like the subject of our main review this month – the Daystate Alpha Wolf Safari Edition.

This electronic masterpiece is a true case of function meeting form, as on one hand it offers cutting-edge tuning via a touchscreen, while on the other it's dressed in an ultra-practical, rustic-style thumbhole stock.

Shooters wanting to spend less, but still wanting a PCP for the field that offers good handling and plenty of accuracy, should take a close look at Phill Price's review of the Scorpion TS. This is the very latest version of BSA's iconic air rifle, and in keeping with its other recent releases is an airgun that's manufactured entirely in the UK.

These two rifles may come from opposite ends of the fiscal scale, but both deliver on what they promise – accurate shooting in the hands of a competent shooter. It's worth remembering the marksmanship principles that everyone needs to adopt to take a successful shot.

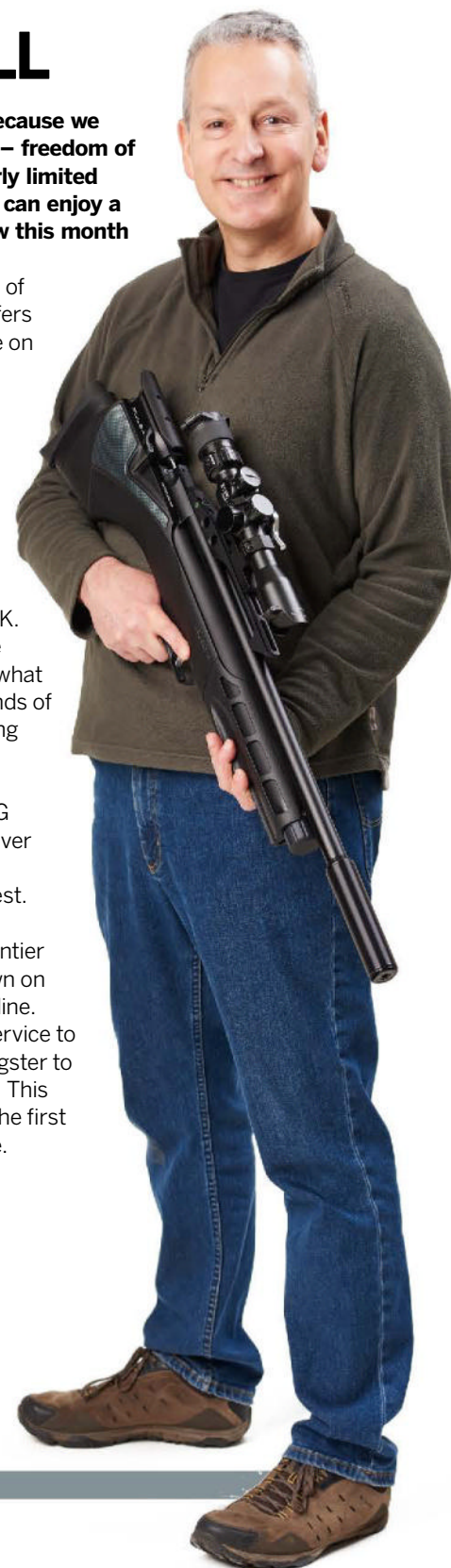
Phill's been getting hands-on with the ASG Schofield, a CO2-powered, pellet-firing revolver that's a great representation of Smith & Wesson's top-break classic from the Old West. He's also been shooting squirrels on a new permission, field-testing the new Hawke Frontier LRF rangefinding binoculars and sitting down on the job in a pair of Ascent Pants from Ridgeline.

Andy McLachlan has been doing a vital service to the airgun community – introducing a youngster to our ranks in the shape of 12-year-old Archie. This young man enjoyed his day at the range in the first of what we hope will be many more to come.

In the meantime, enjoy your shooting.

Mike

Mike Morton
Editor-in-Chief
airgunshooter@futurenet.com



THE AIRGUN SHOOTER PROMISE

AUTHORITY

AIRGUN Shooter is by airgunners for airgunners. Our team has decades of experience in everything from target shooting to hunting and is committed to bringing you the highest quality advice in print and video every month.

PASSION

WE are obsessed with airguns and we love writing about them. We're here to share our knowledge with you and focus on helping you become a better shooter, and we hope you'll share your knowledge and expertise with us, too!

INDEPENDENCE

THE views you read in *Airgun Shooter* are our own, which means you can trust every word you read in these pages. We've built up reputations from years in the field – we're not prepared to pull any punches.

INSPIRATION

OUR mission is to maximise the enjoyment you get from shooting, so every issue is packed with new things to try with your airgun, unparalleled technical insight and the real-world experiences of shooters just like you.

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WIN! UMAREX WALTHER PPK/S
WORTH £115 PAGE 17



AIRGUN SHOOTER

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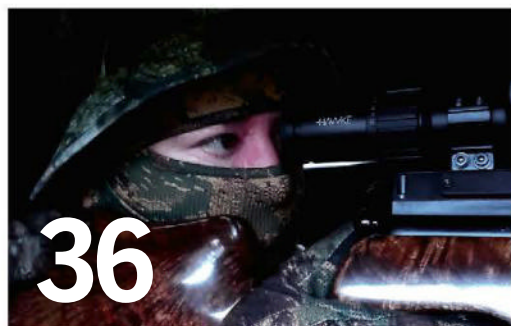
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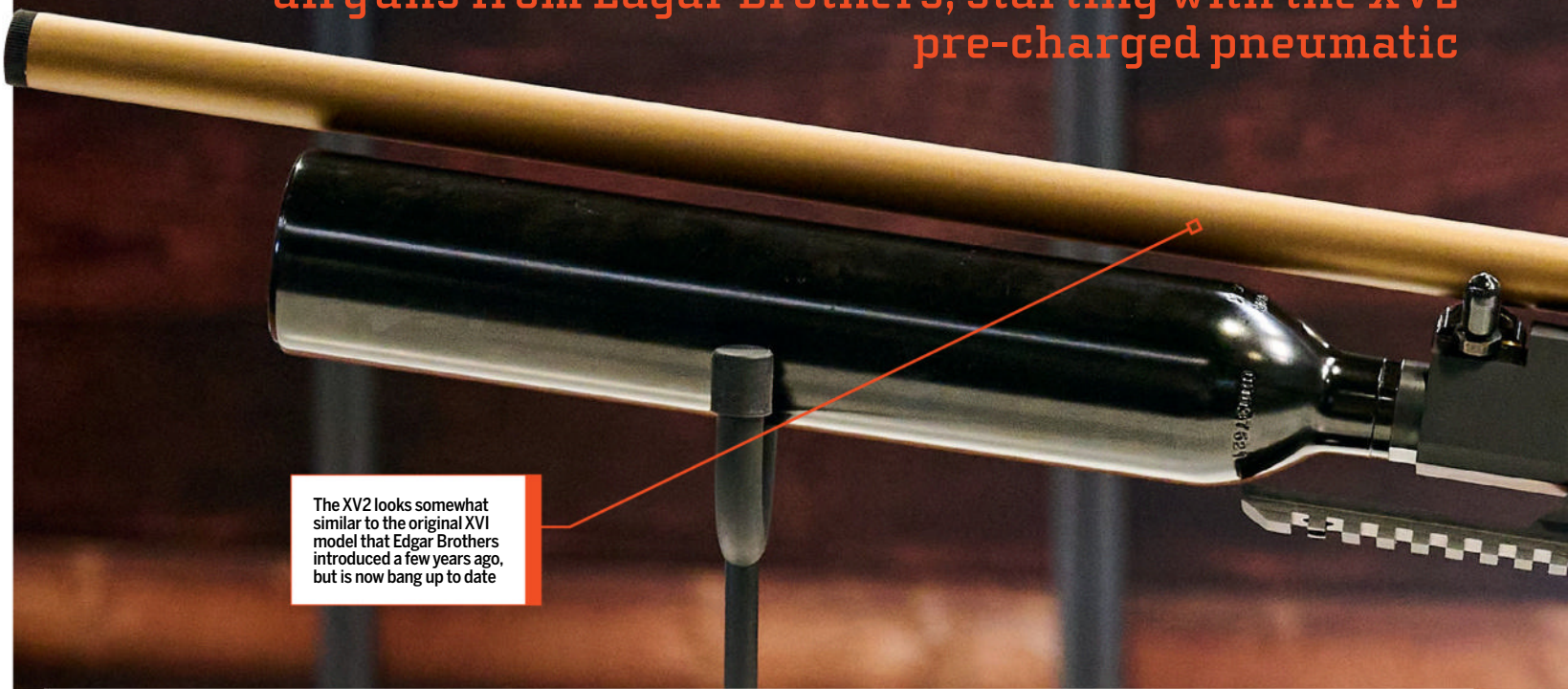
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ZEROING IN

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Phill Price looks forward to a brand new range of airguns from Edgar Brothers, starting with the XV2 pre-charged pneumatic



The XV2 looks somewhat similar to the original XVI model that Edgar Brothers introduced a few years ago, but is now bang up to date

At the British Shooting Show, Edgar Brothers was showing a very flashy bronze version of the brand new EB Arms XV2 PCP. Readers may remember the XVI that the company introduced a few years ago, and the XV2 is something of a spiritual successor to the original XVI design, but being brought right up to date in terms of its layout and style.

This rifle drinks from a large buddy bottle into its sidelever action. This configuration makes the action tall, on top of which we find a bridge-style Picatinny rail that's machined in. There's another section of Picatinny rail bolted to the bottom of the action to accept accessories.

The action looks to be milled from a huge block of aluminium and has a distinctive shape that's unlike anything else. In front of the action I saw that the quick-fill port was under a cover on the left, while the pressure gauge was on the right.

As mentioned, the action has a sidelever, right-hand only, which operates rotary magazines that deliver 14 shots in .177 and 12 in .22 calibre.

Edgar Brothers is the UK distributor for Magpul Industries, which makes a number of firearm accessories, and the XV2 is compatible with AR-15 add-ons, with the pistol grip and butt stock that are fitted to the air rifle coming from that source.

The barrel lives in a shroud to combine sound suppression with that much-loved

bull-barrel look. I noticed that the shroud had a screw-in cap so that it could accept a silencer later.

Of course, the bronze-finished gun that was on display wasn't what any hunter would want, but I also saw black, olive drab and flat dark earth actions, which will clearly be more useful in the field, although I can imagine those who only shoot on the range might fancy the bronze.

At 3.2kg it should be more than manageable for most of us, and with a nine-position comb height and 5cm length of pull adjustment, it should fit the vast majority of folks as well. The best news is that the planned recommended retail price is just £499, making the XV2 seem like very good value for money. ●



The capacity of the buddy bottle is a full 500cc, which should offer plenty of shots per fill in .177 and even more in .22

KEY SPECS

SUPPLIED BY:
Edgar Brothers
(edgarbrothers.com)

MANUFACTURER: EB Arms

MODEL: XV2

PRICE: £499

CALIBRE: .177, .22

MAGAZINE: Rotary, 14
shots in .177, 12 shots in .22

MUZZLE THREAD: 1/2in UNF

BARREL LENGTH: 38cm

BUDDY BOTTLE:
500cc, detachable

AVAILABLE COLOURS:
Black, Olive Drab, Flat Dark
Earth, Bronze

HARD CASE: Yes, supplied
from the factory

OPTICAL RAIL: Picatinny

STOCK: Collapsible



A Picatinny rail is
machined into the
top of the action
for perfect scope
mount alignment

The pistol grip and
multi-position stock
are AR-15-compatible
products that are made
by Magpul Industries



The rifle has a sidelever action with biathlon handle, and the pressure gauge is angled upwards, making it easier to read

RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE
IS JUST £499, MAKING THE XV2
SEEM LIKE VERY GOOD VALUE

NEWS IN BRIEF

QUICK SHOTS...

GET ON TARGET AT THE NORTHERN

Up to 240 competitors are set to take part at the World Hunter Field Target Championships, which is being hosted by the Northern Shooting Show this May at the Yorkshire Event Centre in Harrogate.

This is the first time the international competition has been held in the UK, and will see competitors from across the UK, Europe and South Africa shoot two 40-target courses on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 May. The course will be made up of four standing targets, four kneeling and 32 prone.

The overall winner will go home with a specially commissioned trophy, and there are medals for first, second and third places in each of the classes – Open, Veterans, Ladies, Junior, .22, Springer and International Team. All competitors will receive a free two-day ticket to the show, plus entry to the exclusive tombola which will include lots of airgun-related prizes.

The Northern Shooting Show is expected to welcome more than 20,000 visitors from all over the country looking to try a myriad of shooting-related activities, including shotguns, airsoft, archery, bushcraft and of course airguns. The annual event showcases wares from hundreds of exhibitors all over the world that provide visitors with a unique shopping event that covers everything from country lifestyle to technical shooting gear.

BASC members get in free, while a ticket for a single day costs £20, and it's just £28 for visitors wanting to go on both the Saturday and Sunday. For more details visit northernshootingshow.co.uk



Simon Vant came third in the Open Class in last year's HFT Championship, with Neil Palmer taking first place and Andy Simpson second

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

WILL THE EIGHT BE GREAT?

H&N Sport unveils a new .177 pellet in the Baracuda line that resembles a competitor's offering, but is it as good or better?

Is there a new rival to the mighty JSB Exact? At the British Shooting Show, the man from H&N Sport handed me a sample tube of the company's new Baracuda 8 pellets in .177 which weigh 8.44 grains. I knew the .22 was already here, but I'd not seen the smaller calibre before. I asked for a full tin to do some proper testing, but they only had the tiny samples.

Being blunt, I pointed out that they looked exactly like and weighed the same as the JSB Exact and he laughed. "Yes they do, but there's one big difference. You can buy these!" It's well-known around the industry that JSB is offering some very long delivery times and H&N has seen an opportunity to fill in the gap, which is just good business sense. The real question of course is are they as good?

The importer doesn't have a delivery date so I can't do any proper testing yet. Time will reveal the worthiness of this new pretender.



Chris Jensen from Daystate America shows off the prototype GP at the recent IWA trade fair in Nuremberg

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

RED WOLF GOES GRAND PREMIUM!

Competitive target shooters have cause to rejoice, because Daystate has unveiled a new member of the wolf pack

Daystate has another new rifle that should wow target shooters worldwide – the Red Wolf Grand Prix. This model combines the electronic action of the standard Wolf with a

multi-adjustable stock co-developed with Precision Rifle Systems, Daystate's official accessory manufacturer.

The new chassis offers an array of features, including quick adjustment to the cheek rest, forend rail and full-length Picatinny rail, as well as a comprehensive range of accessories. I predict we'll be seeing some examples of the GP at this year's Extreme Benchrest competition in Arizona, but the adjustability of the stock should mean it's perfectly capable of taking shots on sitting, prone, kneeling or standing too.

In addition, the Red Wolf Grand Prix's fully electronic action is matched to an electronic trigger that can be fine-tuned. An LCD screen provides vital information on the rifle's status, such as which of the three power settings has been selected, remaining air pressure, shot count and battery voltage.

When the Red Wolf was introduced in 2017, it brought with it a new level of electronic control that was delivered through its MCT (mapped compensated technology) system that uses a digital microprocessor to operate a solenoid-powered air valve. By calculating the precise time and distance the valve needs to open to ensure the air release is identical for each shot, a high degree of accuracy can be attained.

PRECISION GERMAN ENGINEERING



HW97 KT

HW97 KT Synthetic Stainless

Stocks: Synthetic thumb-hole, Beechwood thumb-hole, Blue laminate sporter

HW97 KT - SPRING POWERED UNDER-LEVER THE MONUMENTAL FLAGSHIP SPRINGER



Especially developed for field target shooting, also superb for hunting.

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The Weihrauch muzzle weight reduces muzzle flip and increases accuracy. The HW97 models have specially crafted high comb stock designed for scope use.

Options in the K and KT specifications include beechwood, laminate and synthetic stock.

*Scopes & mounts not included

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CONSERVATION

AIR RIFLES GET NOD FOR SQUIRREL CONTROL

A conservation group reaffirms what airgun hunters have known all along; a sub-12 ft-lb rifle is perfect for squirrels

A report has been published by Airgun Shooter writer JDJ Braithwaite and co-author Charles Dutton providing clear evidence that shooting grey squirrels with air rifles is an extremely effective and humane method of pest control with important implications for conservation.

In recent years, some forestry organisations have questioned the utility of air rifles and shooting in general. Indeed, in one statement discussed in the report, one organisation claimed that shooting grey squirrels with an air rifle was neither effective nor humane. But the Braithwaite-Dutton report notes that these claims have never been based on any published or hard evidence.

The report, published by the European Squirrel Initiative (ESI), seriously challenges unsubstantiated claims held by some woodland organisations. In the first published report to provide empirical data to demonstrate the efficacy of air rifle methods in the lethal and humane removal of grey squirrels, Braithwaite demonstrates that this approach, applied regularly throughout the year, represents an efficient way of achieving year-on-year reductions in grey squirrel numbers.

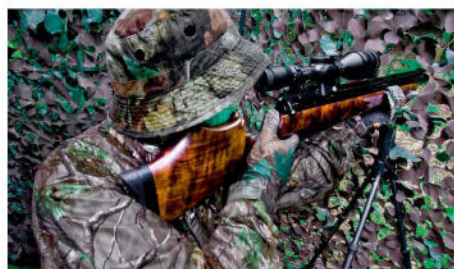
"In the past, some woodland organisations have claimed that shooting methods are an ineffective or inefficient approach for controlling grey squirrels, but there has never been any hard

evidence to substantiate those claims," says Braithwaite, who prepared the report alongside chartered forester Charles Dutton for and on behalf of the ESI.

"With this project, we are able to show the efficacy of using air rifles as a humane and lethal method of reducing grey squirrel numbers. We knew from experience and anecdotal evidence this to be the case, but now we have the clear data to support it."

THE APPROACH

The report itself has two parts, considering both the efficacy of the air rifle method, but also looking at a 21st-century optimised approach to maximise efficiencies in the field. This involved utilising the latest thinking and advances into approaches, considering everything from the design of squirrel feeders, their placement and feed mixes, to the use of passive infra-red (PIR)



The key to using an air rifle effectively is ensuring precise shot placement on the quarry

wildlife trail cams, establishing hides, using thermal imaging and employing ballistic software to model pellet trajectory.

THE CASE STUDY

The project began in May 2018 across seven separate woodlands, with six belonging to a manor house estate in the north of England and one belonging to a neighbouring farm. In 2020, three new woodlands were added by landowners surrounding the manor house. The case study was carried out via optimised air rifle shooting methods implemented by a sole shooter, working as a volunteer.

With a host of woodlands to cover, a plan was devised to set up more than one feeder at a time in separate woodlands, and culling efforts split across these. Once grey squirrels were significantly reduced, new feeders in different woodlands were set up and efforts moved on to these locations. The approach was to rotate the pressure across the woodlands, returning to the original sites to mop up any remaining or new squirrels in the area.

THE RESULTS

Separated in terms of the original project and the additional three woodlands added in 2020, the results demonstrate a clear reduction in grey squirrels removed from the woodlands year on year, with a total number of culls across all woodlands of just under 450 grey squirrels.

"This supports the notion that fewer culls represent fewer numbers in the woodlands in the first place. Therefore, we can conclude the shooting has been effective in removing grey squirrels in the area," says Braithwaite.

"The findings presented in this case study establish that shooting grey squirrels with air rifles and utilising an optimised approach is an effective method for suppressing numbers of the grey squirrel. It is effective and humane."

THE COST TO THE ECONOMY

Research commissioned by ESI reveals that grey squirrels cost the English forestry industry in excess of £40 million per annum. Considering losses, including timber loss, imports, carbon and habitat loss, the cost to the economy could amount to £64 million per year for England alone.

As well as damaging trees, parks and gardens and preying on woodland birds, greys have driven our native red squirrels to near extinction, both through competition and as carriers of the squirrel pox, to which greys are immune.

"Our case study clearly provides the data to support the fact that if air rifle methods are applied throughout the year, we can both reduce, and in some circumstances actually clear, our woodlands of grey squirrel populations," concludes Braithwaite. ●

The full report can be found on the ESI website at bit.ly/AGM173squirrel

Prices may be subject to change and are correct at the time of press, please visit our website for latest pricing.

S.P.E.C.

Blade: Length: 2.44" (61.87 mm)
Edge: Plain
Steel: 8Cr13MoV
Finish: Bead Blast
Thickness: 0.10" (2.64 mm)

Weight: 2.10 oz. (59.53 g)
Overall Length: 5.63" (142.88 mm)
Handle: G10

RRP: £54.99

TAIL BONE

Blade: Length: 2.13" (53.98 mm)
Edge: Plain
Steel: 8Cr13MoV
Finish: Stonewash
Thickness: 0.15" (3.91 mm)

Weight: 2.00 oz. (56.70 g)
Overall Length: 6.31" (160.35 mm)
Handle: Cord-Wrapped Carbon Steel

RRP: £49.99

TUNA

Blade: Length: 3.22" (81.81 mm)
Edge: Plain
Steel: 8Cr14MoV
Finish: Stonewash
Thickness: 0.15" (3.68 mm)

Weight: 3.70 oz. (104.89 g)
Open Length: 7.69" (195.28 mm)
Handle: G10 | Stainless Steel

RRP: £74.99

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THE BARN DOOR

Jim Old worries he may have angered the airgunning gods, but is this the real reason his performance has dipped?

was recently ticked off by one of my club's older members for 'boasting' in Airgun Shooter about a good 25-yard benchrest result. He claimed it was the reason I'd shot a disappointingly below-par score the following month.

"Pride comes before a fall in this game," he said.

"You shouldn't boast about a 5,000 score."

"But it wasn't 5,000," I protested. "It was 4,900. I've never shot a 5,000."

"Oh, haven't you? I have. Many times," he responded.

"But it still doesn't do to boast?" I countered.

"That's right," he nodded.

"Okay," I said. "Point noted."

When I was a nipper, it was drilled into me that I mustn't be a boastful bighead. I think it was common at the time. It was the 1970s, and things had moved on from 'children must be seen, but not heard'. We were allowed to speak, but when we did we had to be polite and not too full of ourselves. Given that back then I genuinely believed the world revolved around me, it was a lesson that was hard-learned.

There are some very talented marksmen at my club, and generally speaking they let their scores speak for themselves. Moving up the rankings in our 25-yard benchrest competition has been my obsession for the last year or so. Through long hours of staring at the monthly results sheets, I've managed to memorise every name above mine on the list and a fair few of those at or just below my level.

The club has hundreds of active members, so being of a slightly shy disposition there are still lots of

people I don't know, and many faces to which I am yet to attach names and vice versa. So it was a bit of a shock when I discovered last week that a guy I've sat alongside at the range a good number of times was in fact one of the chaps vying for the coveted top spot in the 25-yard contest. This gentleman regularly punches out perfect 5,000 scores (50 shots on target, 100 points apiece), but you wouldn't hear it from his lips.

He practises, he shoots his monthly competition cards, he comments on the weather and he packs up his rifle and goes home. He's undeniably an excellent shot, but he doesn't feel the need to tell the world. To be fair to myself, I've not been telling everyone I'm an excellent shot either. This is partly due to my upbringing, but mostly because it's obvious to everyone that I am not. I mentioned my 4,900 score on this page a few months back purely to illustrate that following the investment of both time and money, my shooting had improved over the preceding year.

But yes, I suppose it might have come across as boastful, and for that I apologise. My clubmate might be right. It could have upset the Airgunning God of Humility, and that would explain why my first 25-yard benchrest scores of the year have fallen significantly short of perfect.

While most of my clubmates don't boast about their airgunning prowess, there are some that do. The airgunning gods seem to leave these guys alone and they continue to shoot well, which does strike me as being just a little bit unfair. ☹️



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LETTER OF THE MONTH

NON-SLIPPERY SLINGS

I'm just reading Phill's article about his favourite gun sling getting too slippery to use. Have you thought about looking for a local cobbler – everywhere has one – and getting him to replace or sew on a new shoulder strap? They will have some scrap suede or leather suitable for the job.

One more small tip: if your rifle is sliding around on your shooting rest, try using the towelling strip we badminton players use on our racquet handles. Tear off the backing strip and its self-adhesive layer. It stops guns slipping and won't mark the stock.

Stuart Osborne



Phill's reply: That's a really good idea. I took the sling to a chap that I know who lives nearby. You can see from the photo how well it turned out, so thanks for the tip.

opinion as to which would better suit my requirements.

I regularly shoot up to 45 yards using paper targets and hunt up to my preferred kill range of 30 to 35 yards using a BSA Ultra SE sub-12 ft-lb rifle in .177. This gun is a real pleasure to use, but will only give around 30 shots at full power before dropping off. I'm hoping the above bullpups will give substantially more.

Paul Allen



While Mike can vouch for the objective qualities of rifles like this Ghost, Paul needs to handle both to see which one is right for him

CROSMAN 2240 TUNE-UP

This may be of assistance to owners of the great pistol that is the Crosman 2240 in .22 calibre. I was handed this the other day by my friend Walter. He did not like the trigger as it was on the heavy side.

I must point out that I have not got a more up-to-date trigger adjustment unit, so I set about taking off the side cover from the hand grip and then extracted the trigger spring. I just shortened it by simply squeezing it between my thumbs and then refitted it. It worked the first time, giving a much lighter trigger release. However, if you overdo the squeezing you may find the loading bolt does not function correctly, so if that happens the spring must be readjusted outwards slightly.

On placing the pistol onto the workbench, I noticed that the

barrel strap had been over-tightened, causing the barrel to bend downward slightly. This was due to there being too tight a fit on the barrel from the securing screw pushing down on it. It's not that easy to adjust the strap



This is the spring that Neil adjusted by simply squeezing it together to give it more elastic potential energy

screw, so it's just on the loose side to give the barrel a bit of room for flexibility within the barrel strap. That will prevent barrel pinch from the screw.

Well at least the Crosman 2240 is now performing to the liking of Walter. He soon had his Crosman 14.3gr pellets zooming down the garden range. I was just glad I had to hand my Allen key set and a 5/64in key to adjust the screw. I also placed a spot of blue Loctite on a couple of threads, seeing how the screw was getting quite loose from a lot of adjusting over a number of years.

Neil Edwards

NEW RIFLE ADVICE

I am seeking some advice. After narrowing down my list of bullpups to the Brocock BRK Ghost Carbine and the FX Maverick, I would like your professional and unbiased

Mike's reply: Paul, I think you have drawn up a great shortlist of potential bullpup purchases. I have no personal experience with the FX Maverick, but do know it to be an excellent rifle. I have tested the Ghost, however, and can certainly confirm that this will do what you require of it.

But as with most things to do with airguns it has to come down to personal choice, budget and availability. Both rifles will offer enhanced levels of accuracy and shot count. But deciding which one is right for you will mean visiting gun shops to see and handle them both. I'm sorry this answer isn't as definitive as you might have been looking for, but the choice has to be yours.

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UMAREX WALTHER PPK/S

While it's nice to see airguns created out of original designs, there's a huge appetite for CO2-powered replicas, and Umarex is an absolute master of this craft, the Walther PPK/s being a prime example. This little pistol has a smoothbore barrel, shoots 4.5mm (.177) BBs and is powered by a single 12g CO2 capsule. The stick magazine has a capacity of 15 rounds and an average shot count of around 60. Better yet, the PPK/s offers blowback action.

While the Walther PP series is steeped in real history, I think it's fair to say most shooters would want this gun because of its association with James Bond, although his pistol is a PPK rather than the more modern PPK/s depicted here. There's a raft of authentic features, notably the official Walther logo on the slide and grips, as well as the cartridge calibre designation of 7.65mm on the left-hand side of the slide. This of course is incorrect for the airgun, but it is still a nice touch nonetheless.

The mag is a single-stack type, meaning each BB sits immediately on top of the one below, rather than a double-stack configuration where the BBs are layered almost two abreast in a concertina pattern.

The magazine is loaded by holding down the follower and keeping it there under spring tension while up to 15 BBs are inserted.

The Umarex Walther PPK/s is a petite replica of a petite original, and while it's not quite the same as James Bond's PPK, it'll give you a similar tactile experience so you can hit the range and unleash your inner 007.

Our thanks go out to John Rothery Wholesale (bisley-uk.com) for supplying this fabulous competition prize.



To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following question correctly:

What is the configuration of the magazine?

- A) Single-stack, 10 BBs**
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HUNTING DOWN SOME OPTICAL ADVICE

**Phill Price offers
air rifle hunters a
few tips and tricks
to help them get the
best out of their
glass, whether it's
ranging, spotting
or shooting**

Like all modern hunters, I rely totally on optics to maximise my field performance, so I thought I'd share a few things I've been taught and some others I learned the hard way.

Regular readers will know that I always champion the use of binoculars and have done for many years. People have told me often that binoculars are an unnecessary expense and a bother to carry around, and while I accept those points to a degree, until you've tried a pair properly you simply cannot know what you're missing.

BINOCULARS

My favourite hunting saying is that you can't shoot what you can't see, and I honestly believe that's true.

“UNTIL YOU'VE TRIED A PAIR YOU SIMPLY CANNOT KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING”

I wrote recently about the correct technique for using them, so I won't fully cover that here, but suffice to say that you do need to really look carefully and work each area slowly until your quarry finally reveals itself.

As for the subject of expense, there are really decent bins on sale these days for around £150 that offer great performance in a neat, easy-carry lightweight package. Take the Hawke Frontier 8x42 that weighs just 555g and costs £149. I use a pair of these a lot of the time and have literally no complaints. Sure, there are bins with even better performance if you'd like to spend more, especially in really low light, but for daytime use I like these a lot. Mine are a bit battered from all the use and knocks, but that's what the rubber armour is for, right?

If that weight is still too much, folding ones like an 8x20 will still give you an advantage over the naked eye, weigh almost nothing and fit into a jacket pocket with room to spare. I have a pair that I use when weight and bulk are my most

important considerations, and many's the time they've shown their worth. They can be a good compromise for some.

A great tip a professional stalker gave me is to set the magnification on your scope the same as the mag of your binoculars. So 8x bins means 8x on your scope – easy. ➔



TIP

By setting your scope's magnification to match your binoculars, both images will appear similar, saving precious time

TIP

Phill guarantees that a modest pair of decent quality binoculars will improve your hunting success

The practical reason for this is that by matching the magnification, the image will appear similar as you swap from your bins to the rifle, which will help you locate your quarry quickly.

TELESCOPIC SIGHTS

Good scopes have a huge range of magnification adjustment, often very high.

TIP

Even a small pair of folding binoculars are a huge advantage over the naked eye

This can be great for long-range target shooting, but can be a hindrance to the hunter in some situations. The key difficulty is that high mag causes the field of view to become very narrow, delivering the opposite of the idea above. If you're struggling to find a squirrel's head high in a tangle of branches, only seeing an image 1ft wide can be hugely frustrating.

Conversely, if your field of view is four times bigger, your search will be quicker and more likely to succeed. In fact, if I think my quarry could be very close I'll drop my mag right down to 6x or even 4x. You can always make a shot work with low magnification, but you often can't make it work at 14x.

This brings me onto reticles. Again, modern scopes tend to have reticles that have been designed for long-range work, and because of this tend to be very fine. This allows for maximum precision by covering as little of the target as possible.

In good light on a clear target this is ideal, but in poor light they can be hard to find, which can be horribly frustrating. Many scopes offer illumination that can mitigate the problem, but selecting just the right level of brightness can be tricky too. If you set it too bright it will dazzle your eye and obscure your target, but if you go too low the crosshairs can still be hard to find.

For hunting at airgun ranges, a simple, bold reticle is your friend. Illumination can be useful on these reticles too, but most often you can aim precisely without needing it until the light gets very low, at which point perhaps you should let that shot go anyway. If it's so dark that you cannot always be sure of correct quarry identification, it's best to let that one live for another day.



Another consideration of high magnification is that as mag goes up, image brightness goes down, all factors considered. Of course, there are many factors that can affect that statement, but it's a decent rule of thumb and nobody needs a dim image, making it more difficult to see your reticle and aim point at a critical moment.

A criticism that's levelled at high-mag scopes I tend to disagree with is that they exaggerate your wobbles.

FOR HUNTING AT AIRGUN RANGES, A SIMPLE, BOLD RETICLE IS YOUR FRIEND

All the scope is doing is telling you the truth about just how unsteady we actually are. Now some people might find that off-putting, and perhaps that's a negative for you. If so I understand, but higher magnification isn't what's making you wobble more.

TIP

No optical device can work well when it's covered in dirt; however, make sure to always clean your lenses carefully to avoid causing any damage

You could use this effect as a training aid while you're practising as you can see how each technique reduces the wobbles, making you a more accurate shooter in the end.

LENS CARE

Any optical device can have its performance reduced by letting the lenses get dirty, and it only takes a little knowledge to keep them clean and their performance top-notch. Firstly, keep them clean by using lens covers all the time the scope is not in use. Don't let dust build up on your objective lens while the gun is stored.

With the lens caps on they'll remain spotless. However out in the field dirt accumulates on them from dust on the wind and rain falling, so in time cleaning does become necessary.

You can get some neoprene scope covers that are designed to be used in the field that stretch over the whole thing. These not only protect the lenses, but also absorb knocks and scratches. When not needed, you can just stuff it into a pocket to be refitted later. Another option is flip-up covers that stay on the scope to be released as your quarry comes into sight. These are invaluable in wet weather and are a great aid to clear vision.

On the lens surfaces, the manufacturers apply sophisticated coatings that reduce reflections and enhance light transmission, and we really don't want to scratch them off. The way to start is to use a soft brush to gently flick the particles away. I like to blow as I brush until I feel certain that the dust is all gone before moving to step two. I then use a lens cloth and a cleaning fluid I got from a camera shop to really clean the surface and remove any remaining dirt and grease.

Take your time with this, going slowly until everything is sparkling. This ensures that you're getting 100% from your investment every time.

Dirty lenses are the biggest problem when you have low sun striking them at an angle, a frustration I've suffered enough times to want to avoid it as much as I can. I can well remember looking at a rabbit sitting unaware of my presence just 20 yards away, but I simply couldn't see it through the scope as the light flared all across the objective lens that evening. Just in case you're wondering, no, I didn't get that rabbit, but I did swear at the scope. A second factor was that particular scope's lens coatings were rubbish, as I was learning to my cost.

TIP

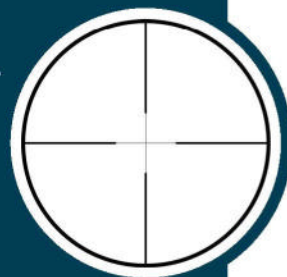
Phill always uses a cloth designed for lens cleaning, with a brush and cleaning solution to match



RETICLES

30/30

The 30/30 Duplex reticle is a classic design for the very reason that it works very well



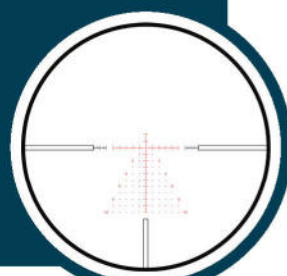
LR DOT

The LR Dot is Phill's favourite, being bold enough to see in variable light and the illumination works only on the dot, so never obscures his quarry



MIL PRO

The Mil Pro is a fantastic reticle for long-range targets, but it is a bit too busy for Phill in a close-range hunting situation



TIP

A stretch scope cover is a good idea as it will protect the whole telescopic sight, not just the lenses



“RANGEFINDERS TYPICALLY COME WITH 6X MAGNIFICATION, WHICH OFFERS A WIDE IMAGE”

TIP

Flip-up lens covers stay down for maximum protection right up until the moment you raise them to shoot



TIP

A laser rangefinder is truly valuable to the airgun hunter, so have a look soon if you don't already own one

I sold it soon after, and ended up buying something that was much better.

HOW MUCH?

That brings me to another consideration: how much to spend. Deerstalkers who constantly hunt in low light say you should spend more on your scope than you do on your rifle. That might be a bit extreme for airgun use, though it does make the point that the quality of the scope is very important. If you have a fixed budget, it might be worth spending a little less on the rifle and more on the scope to get the best combination you can. You might choose to buy the beech stock version of your new gun over the walnut one to free up some cash for a better model of scope.

My final recommendation is to try a laser rangefinder. Like binoculars, they're inexpensive today and the lenses have improved beyond recognition (pun intended). They used to cost a fortune and had a terrible sight picture, but today they can be afforded by almost anyone and will improve your accuracy and shot placement overnight.

Rangefinders typically come with 6x magnification, which offers a wide image, helping you find your quarry quickly. The objective will be around 20mm, so keeping the mag low means that the image will still be bright enough to provide decent clarity.

If it sounds like I think about optics a lot, it's because I do. They're a massive part of my hunting success and I cannot imagine a hunting life without them. An old boy I know tells stories of hunting rabbits with a .22 BSA Airsporter that had plain, open sights. His maximum hunting range was 12 yards, so his fieldcraft must have been incredible. I think it mostly involved waiting, overlooking their warren and taking them as they emerged, one by one, but even then he said clean kills were not all that common, so being close increased your chances of grabbing the rabbit to deliver the coup de grâce. How times have changed! ●

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A DELVE INTO TWELVE

Twelve foot-pounds is the norm for most of us, and while we can have more power if we hold a Firearm Certificate, Ray Garner argues this is plenty

My love of small-town America enlarged no end at the sight of a Sheridan Model C in Lewistown, Montana. It was for sale for not much money, and was simply too good to leave behind on that cross-country trip in 1988.

This was my first and only 'high-power' air rifle. The Blue Streak, as Sheridan liked to call the little Model C, came in a cardboard box with a pack of .20 calibre slugs for company and the excitement of a new land that never goes away.

That rifle was a direct descendant of the famous and very collectable Model A Supergrade and, like the Model C, was a multi-stroke pneumatic, which had to be pumped up until either you were tired or became distracted, whichever came first. The reward for all of this effort was about 15 ft-lb of energy.

Sheridan's rifles were unmistakably North American in styling, having the look of a firearm with fine handling qualities and

bolt-action loading. Arguably, it was this rifle type that led to the modern pre-charged rifles which we take pleasure in today – at least with regard to their general configuration and operation.

Sheridan's little sporter travelled with me into Wyoming and Colorado, shooting as often as possible in the national forests and public lands. When the time came for me to return home, my Sheridan was required to remain with Uncle Sam. The reason for that was simply power, as the Model C had too much of it.

DAINGEROUS AIR WEAPONS

All those who remember Woodstock and the Summer of Love might just recall a piece of legislation from the same year which changed airgun ownership forever. The Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969 slipped quietly into English law (and soon after into Scottish law) in the spring of that year. This sought to limit the power of airguns to 12 ft-lb of energy at the muzzle for rifles, and 6 ft-lb for pistols.

Likely these new rules did not cause much worry 50-odd years back, as many airguns of that time were relatively low-powered anyway. Possibly a few came close, such as the Webley Mk3 and BSA's Airsporter, which perhaps put out about 10.5 to 11 ft-lb. BSF's model B55 break-barrel also had a good reputation for producing respectable levels of energy, but even spring-powered icons such as this rarely approached the 'dangerous' level of energy that might have concerned our lawmakers.

A likely cause behind the sudden decision of the Home Office to get a little bit windy regarding airguns were the levels of energy to be had in those days from imported multi-stroke rifles. Such examples were my forsaken Sheridan or possibly the Barracuda rifle from Germany, which was a Weihrauch HW35 converted to accept a charge of ether into the air chamber. The gas was intended to detonate under pressure from the spring piston, which would increase the power output, and was likely to wreck the rifle in short order.

While this Steyr produces only 6 ft-lb of muzzle energy, Lewis and Clarke might still recognise the concept of a modern PCP



David Hughes, a pioneer airgun retailer in the 1960s and '70s, tells the story of the Home Office testing several standard (not ether-boasted) Weihrauch HW35s of that period, and finding them to be running at about 13 ft-lb. David proffered that the likely cause of this power aberration was dieseling brought about by excess grease in the air chamber. Once this had been burned off, successive shots were at much more typical energy levels.

HERE TO STAY

WHB Smith, the author of the classic book *Gas, Air and Spring Guns of the World*, carried out his own tests on the HW35, and found them to be running at about 9 ft-lb of energy. Either way, our lawmakers were likely properly spooked by all of this, and the energy levels that were prescribed in '69 were here to stay.

In all probability they looked at what most spring airguns were producing at that time, and by chance decided on an energy level that was just above that. The upshot is that in order to legally own an air rifle in England and Wales which exceeds 12 ft-lb of energy at the muzzle, a person must be in possession of a valid Firearm Certificate (FAC). An air pistol may not under any circumstances exceed 6 ft-lb of energy, as

“THE ENERGY LEVELS THAT WERE PRESCRIBED IN '69 WERE HERE TO STAY”

this would cause it to become a firearm that would fall within the category of 'prohibited weapons'.

The 1969 Act had little effect on airgun shooters, as airguns generally fell below prescribed energy levels and were described in the Act as 'low-powered'. The spring-powered guns of that period could not be easily uprated to FAC energy without sacrificing the sweet-shooting characteristics associated with sub-12 ft-lb rifles. This changed a little in the '80s when respected professional airgun tuners such as Venom Arms and Airmasters came along, but even then these folk were concerned with making rifles shoot better rather than harder.

What changed things for those interested in FAC-levels of energy was the modern pre-charged air rifle pioneered by the likes of Daystate with the Huntsman model of the 1980s. Currently, many manufacturers of pre-charged air rifles offer products with a choice of muzzle energy.

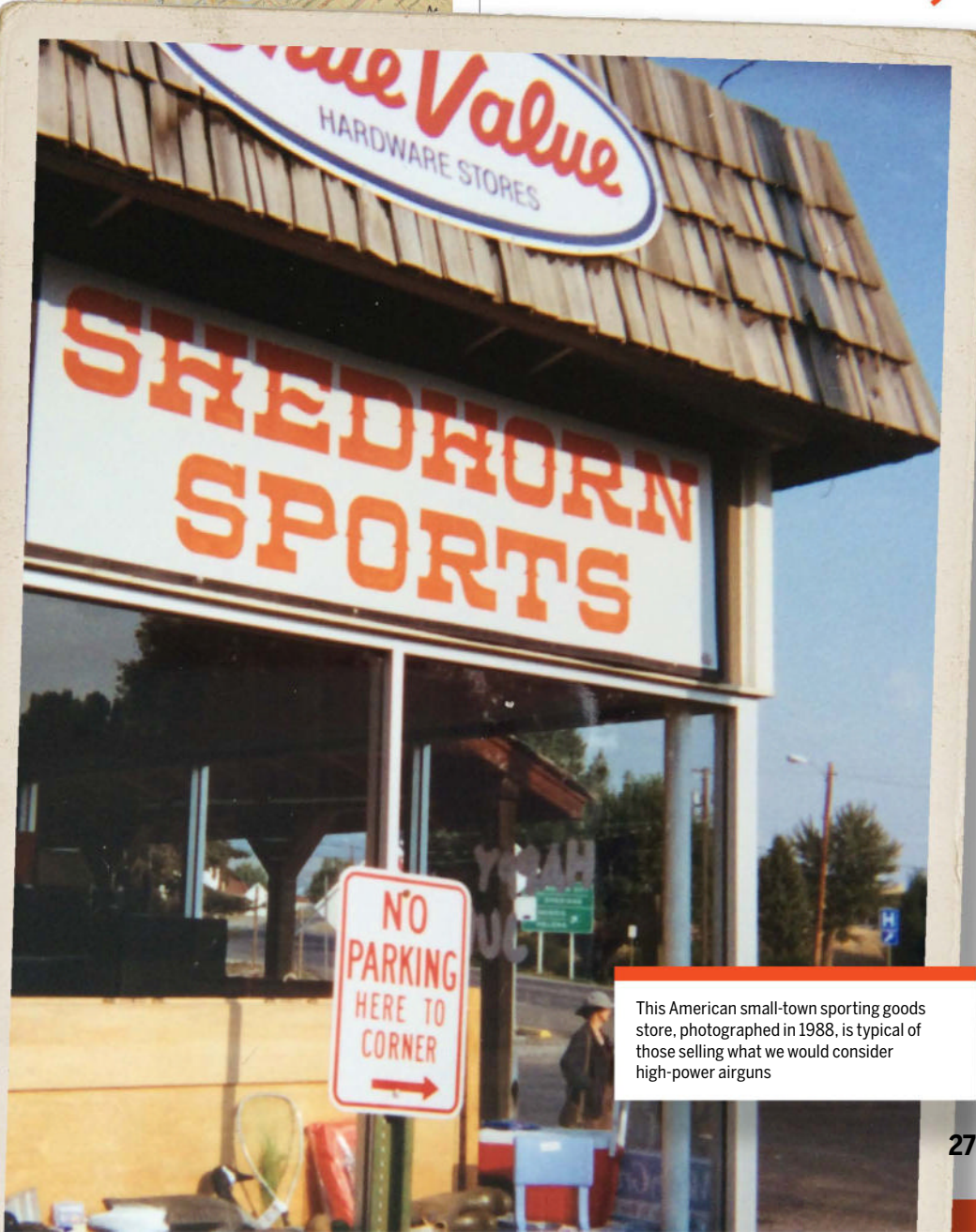
A chronograph is an essential tool for the airgun shooter in order to check an airgun's consistency and legality



Steyr, for example, will sell you an LG110 in various calibres, with factory-set energy levels of 6, 12 or 18 ft-lb. Some makers go much higher. An exhibitor at SHOT Show 2023 was claiming over 700 ft-lb for his company's big-bore air rifle! Sensible?

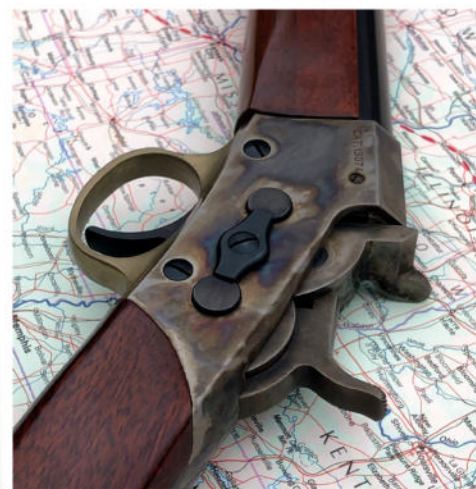
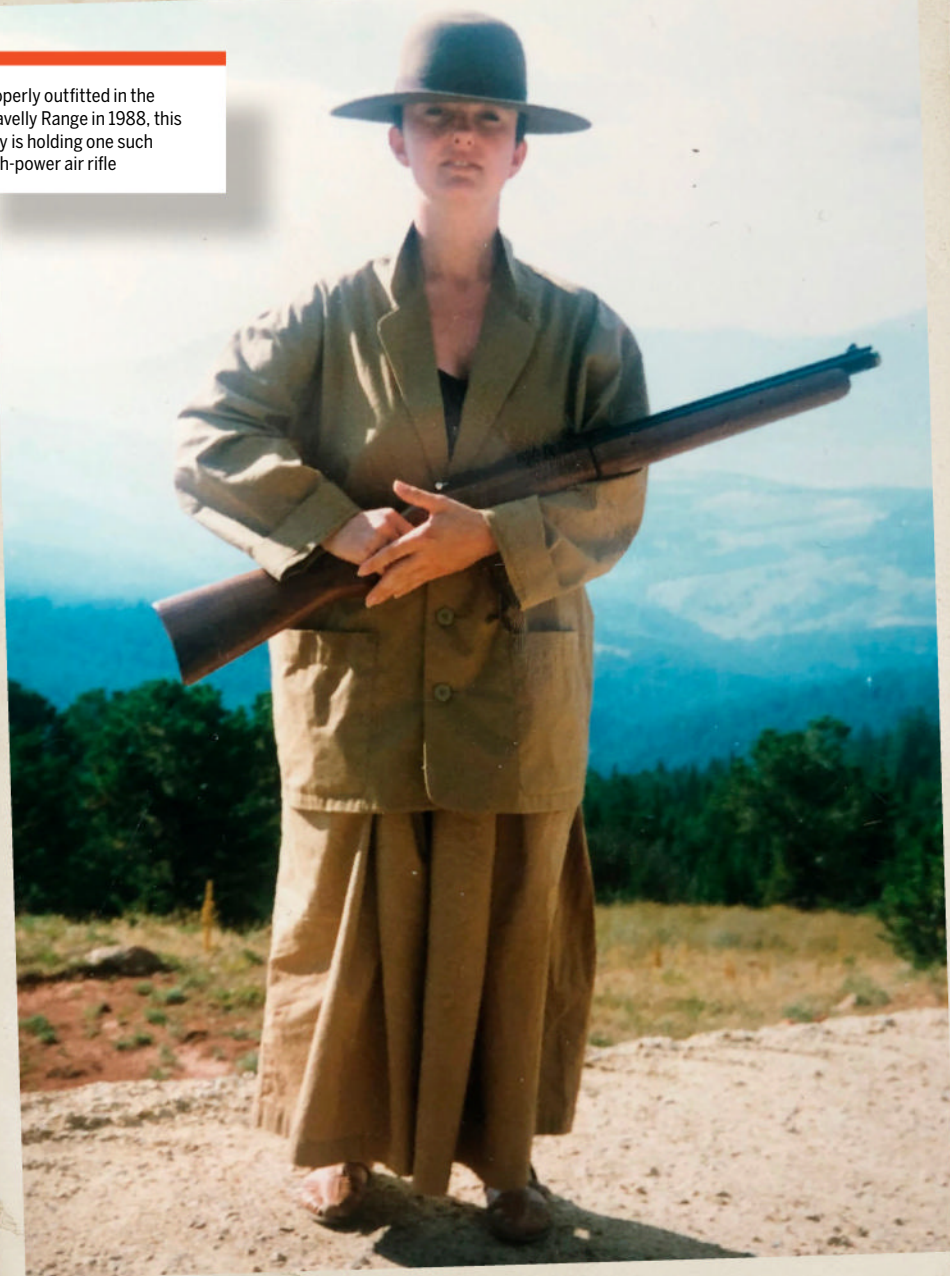
Historically, some ball reservoir, barrel jacket reservoir and butt reservoir rifles were capable of very high levels of energy. Captain Meriwether Lewis carried a .46 calibre airgun with him on the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804. This is thought to have been a butt reservoir European-made Girardoni rifle that fired ball ammunition from a gravity-fed magazine. This was discharged on numerous occasions in order to impress or intimidate native tribes.

The members of the 'Corps of Discovery' party travelled from the Midwest by horseback and pirogue canoe through the Rocky Mountains and onto the Pacific coast of what is now the United States in order to realise the extent of lands bought from the French in the Louisiana Purchase.



This American small-town sporting goods store, photographed in 1988, is typical of those selling what we would consider high-power airguns

Properly outfitted in the Gravelly Range in 1988, this lady is holding one such high-power air rifle



Ray loved shooting this rolling block single-shot .22 LR rimfire for a time, but nowadays is content with nothing but sub-12 ft-lb airguns

the .22 Long Rifle rimfire. This chambering is wonderfully versatile, as cartridges may be had offering a wide spectrum of energy levels from a single firearm, starting with the tiny CB cap up to hyper-velocity cartridges such as CCI's Stinger.

And so it happened. I applied for and received an FAC, and bought myself a .22 cartridge rifle. I experimented with all cartridges that could be safely chambered in my rifle, including Shorts, Longs, Zimmers and – the only ones which gave good accuracy – Long Rifle. The low-velocity cartridges like Shorts and Zimmers gave worse accuracy than that obtainable from a good pre-charged air rifle.

The real attraction of the .22 rimfire is the availability of very compact actioned firearms designed to take this self-contained energy source, together with the astonishing variety of factory loads available in this cartridge. Manufacturers' ballistic data varies, but generally the .22 Short gives about 850fps with a 29gr bullet. Zimmers with the same bullet go at 770fps, compared to Stingers which produce 1640fps with a 32gr bullet.

This was a completely fascinating period of learning new things, and I do find all types of shooting truly interesting, including that done with shotguns and centrefire rifles. For sheer shooting pleasure and simplicity, however, I believe that there is nothing more joyous than a sub-12 ft-lb air rifle. I no longer have any firearms, and these days shoot only low-powered airguns that I find enormously satisfying. They can be shot almost anywhere, they are quiet and unbelievably accurate, and you don't need a mile of open land beyond your target.

Do I want another high-power air rifle? No, I believe not. The 12 ft-lb limit suits me well and is as much as I am ever likely to need. ●

When they failed to rendezvous with a ship sent to return them to the East, they turned round and did the overland journey in reverse, covering almost 8,000 miles over a period of two and a half years.

There are several references in the official journal of the expedition to the airgun, and numerous tales of that shining adventure. On one occasion Captain Lewis was exploring alone and remote from the party. He recalls an encounter with a large bear that approached him at about 20 paces. Having overlooked to reload his single-shot powder and ball rifle which he had discharged at a bison, Captain Lewis escaped into a river and brought forward an *espontoon* (a short spear). Upon seeing this defensive stance, the bear declined combat, turned and ran away at speed for several miles, turning only to check if he was being chased.

If you like true adventure stories, do read *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* – it is a treasure for lovers of wilderness, courage and ingenuity.

NOT WORTHWILE

While abandoning my little Sheridan to providence on the High Plains, it did occur to me to apply for an FAC and have the rifle shipped over. As it turned out, I couldn't be bothered. The thought of the bureaucracy, plus the cost and complication, seemed to me to be not worthwhile in order to gain just a few ft-lb of energy. Likely the man in the pawnshop in Bozeman thought so too as he handed over not quite enough money.

Anyway, a few years on from the Bozeman incident, my curiosity got the better of me and I began to think more and more about the airgun's nearest neighbour,

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A NEW PERMISSION

Phill Price is delighted to have a new shoot to explore, and makes a success of his very first foray against the grey squirrel population

I wrote last month that I was hopefully going to gain a new permission, and it's only gone and happened! The farm hosts a game shoot over the winter, with many of the drives running along a river. This makes my labrador, Joe, very useful because he swims like an otter and loves working in water, which makes him popular with the gamekeeper. The keeper had mentioned that he had way too many squirrels on the ground, and the damage they were causing and the food they were eating was costing him a lot of money and wasting his precious time.

He occasionally runs traps, but often lacks the time to go around setting them and so they sit unused. Naturally, I told him that I'm rather good at reducing squirrel numbers, so he invited me to have a walk around the farm to take his guidance on the squirrel hotspots. The gamebird feeders filled with grain are the obvious magnets, and as we moved around there were plenty of squirrels to be seen.

MAN WITH A GUN

With a better understanding of where he'd like me to concentrate my efforts, we agreed where I should park and how I would let the owner, farm manager and himself know when I planned to go. This would ensure no one would be surprised to find a man with a gun on the land.

I couldn't wait to get started, so as soon as I could find the time, along I went. The first target area was in 'the swamp' as the shoot calls it. It's pretty wet in places, but the part where the huge steel drum feeder is found is actually completely dry, albeit beside a large pond that's full of ducks.

I approached the area slowly, expecting to see squirrels, but I saw not a one. I had spotted a suitable tree to use as a backrest and set about establishing my shooting position. First job, remove anything with thorns, as I prefer to sit on the ground rather than on a stool. This has several advantages in my opinion.

Firstly, sitting low to the ground with a big tree to hide your silhouette means that you're quite well hidden. Secondly, low equals stable and stability equals accuracy, and that's what shooting airguns is all about.

Next, I placed my little foam pad seat under my bum and then spread the legs of my trigger sticks wide to bring the cradle down to the right height. Finally, I draped a section of Jack Pyke hide net across the sticks for a little extra camouflage to aid the usual camo jacket, hat, gloves and face veil that I wear. ➔



This is the view that Phill sees when he's sat behind the hide net, overlooking the red feeder in the distance

HUNTING GREY SQUIRRELS

Using this lightweight net over the trigger sticks means Phill can be easily concealed in moments from just about anywhere





Of course, the flask of coffee and a KitKat were placed well within reach. Spare magazines were checked and placed in a chest pocket to be on hand when needed as well.

A wise old shooter once told me that you need 20 minutes for the countryside to return to normal activity after being disturbed, so I passed the time watching the woodland birds coming and going from the feeder. One robin was in and out like lightning, while a couple of dunnocks seemed to feed at a far more sedate pace. A brief visit from a greater spotted woodpecker was a highlight, especially through my binoculars.

BACK TO WAITING

Suddenly, a very jumpy grey squirrel appeared from nowhere and was clearly nervous. It scampered around and kept going up and down several trees, hardly staying still at all. There was no chance of a shot, so I stayed quiet to see if it would settle. It soon disappeared and I settled back to waiting.

Some 15 minutes later, another one came along and was clearly in a different frame of mind to the first. It trundled up to the feeder, took a grain and sat up to eat it. With the rifle on the sticks and roughly trained on the feed drum, I only needed a small movement to bring the sights onto its skull and release the trigger. It dropped on the spot and I was on the scoreboard.

The next arrived, travelling noisily through the bushes towards the feed bin. I bided my time and as I'd hoped it eventually repeated the feeding behaviour of the first one and met the same fate. Another came in all twitchy and quick like the first one, but stopped on a tree trunk, frozen still. This required me to relocate the sticks, making lots of noise and commotion, yet the squirrel remained.

Phill set up camp behind this fallen tree, which was both comfortable and well-hidden, essential for any type of stakeout like this



Every squirrel taken by Phill means less chance for them to steal grain, damage woodland and take songbirds' eggs

At the shot, it drove all its claws into the bark and appeared locked on, but by the time I reloaded I could clearly see where the shot had landed and knew in just a few seconds it would drop to the ground, which it duly did.

The keeper was indeed right about the numbers. There really were loads of squirrels in the swamp. In a quiet moment, I was taking some practice shots at a number of inanimate targets just for confidence when a load of noise from the bushes attracted my attention.

Two squirrels were chasing through the canopy and I watched carefully, hoping for a chance. This would have required me to move the sticks again, but as they were moving so fast I rested the rifle on my knee and covered the area they were in. Just then, one stopped facing head-down, and my shot hit dead-centre on its head. Like the other one, it seemed locked into the bark. The second one froze as I cycled the bolt.

“IN TOTAL, I SAW SIX SQUIRRELS AND KILLED FOUR, WHICH MADE ME LOOK GOOD”

I've learned to listen to the magazine click as it rotates so that I know it is delivering another pellet, but in that vital moment there was silence. What an idiot! I'd shot the rifle dry and needed another magazine in a hurry. Just as I deserved for such a silly mistake, my chance was gone as the squirrel sped away.

In total, I saw six squirrels and killed four, which made me look good to the keeper as he encouraged me to visit again soon. He's brought in most of the feeders to stop them rusting and being damaged by the deer, but will keep four running to mark out my target spots.

THE MAN WHO DELIVERS

I'm so lucky and grateful to have a new permission; I know just how hard it can be to get some shooting. Because of this, my focus will be on doing what I'm asked and delivering the results the keeper is hoping for. He doesn't need somebody strolling around the farm having a day out in the country – he wants squirrels killed and I intend to be the man who delivers.

I've also offered to go along and help on some of their work party days, repairing pens and being on hand when the gamebird poults are delivered in the summer, which is a particularly smelly and tiring job.



You're looking at the reason Phill has a new permission – Joe is a hard-working picking up dog on winter game shoot days

When you consider that some deerstalkers pay thousands of pounds a year for their shooting rights, a little hard work to shoot for free seems like a bargain.

It's very easy to lose a permission by being cocky or ignoring an instruction to stay out of a particular area. I've heard lots of horror stories about airgun hunters who annoyed their hosts in all manner of stupid ways, some so outrageous that they're hard to believe. All shoots have the potential for friction with those who oppose shooting sports, so avoiding confrontation is the best approach, even when you're doing nothing wrong at all.

On one of my permissions, another pheasant shoot, a neighbour will come out screaming and shouting any time she sees a gun and then immediately calls the farmer to scream and shout at him. He doesn't need that hassle and grief in his day, so avoiding the problem is by far the best idea. That keeps me in his good books and my permission continues.

I'll be back at my new shoot soon after the squirrels and beginning to learn the ground. Wish me luck! ●



The squirrel numbers are noticeably down, which makes the keeper happy

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THE FRUITS OF HIS LABOURS

JDJ Braithwaite has set up a feeder and knows the greys are out there, so it's time to capitalise on all his hard work

In my previous article I discussed returning to a section of woodland I had been shooting, but had pulled out of more than a year ago. On my return I had placed a feeder to assess the level of activity. The resulting high engagement was proof that it had been well worth making the effort.

Now knowing that coming back to this area was worthwhile, I will detail here the setting up of the hide and the first shooting session of my return. For this wood, I decided on setting up a pop-up hide. The main reasons mitigating this decision were that it was winter and the natural woodland cover was low. That meant there was little to work with in terms of building a natural hide, or indeed just adding leaf netting.

In addition, a pop-up gives the most protection against the elements, and the weather will be inhospitable at this time of the year. I already knew where I wanted the hide to go relative to the already established feeder, so it was just a case of setting it up.

PUTTING UP A POP-UP

I've used pop-up hides for many years. I tend to leave them in situ, as because I am covering so many woods it's not possible to store them all at home. It also makes practical sense when you want to slip quietly into the woods. If you are looking to do the same, I can share my experience and tips.

When you purchase one, throw away any tent pegs and cording that comes with it. The pegs are too thin to gain any purchase in the ground, and the cording is not typically of quality and will wear through really quickly.

The consequences of using what the manufacturer sends with the hide will become evident to you when you revisit the wood after a storm. In high winds, the hide itself acts like a kind of 'sail' and captures the wind that hits it – which is its main design failing. If not secured in its place, you can be

IT MAKES PRACTICAL SENSE WHEN YOU WANT TO SLIP QUIETLY INTO THE WOODS

sure it will go walkabout in the woods and can be relocated tens, if not hundreds of yards away. I speak from experience, and have had to recover hides that have been battered in the storms – but ones I never fully secured in the first place.

I learned my lesson and I share it here with you now. I've never had a hide move once secured with heavy-duty pegs and decent-quality paracord. Even with heavy-duty pegs, these alone will not always be sufficient, so it's best to also secure the hide with some paracord of decent quality. →

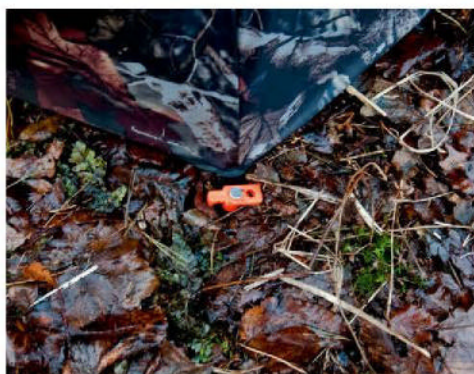


If the hide comes with its own accompaniments then JDJ reckons you should just throw them away, as he much prefers to buy his own heavy-duty pegs (left) and paracord (right)

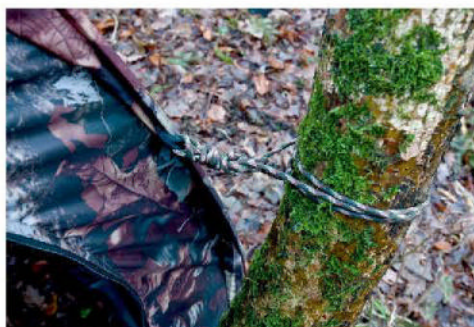




Once unpacked, some minor positioning is required to ensure the hide faces the feeder correctly and allows for a stealthy entrance



Place the heavy-duty tent pegs into each of the four ground eyelets to help secure the hide



Secure the upper eyelets to trees or similar using the paracord to get the right amount of tension

It's well worth the effort and mild investment. On occasion I will also use the odd old hide pole, as some can have a nice long and sturdy spike.

Another tip is that when pegging out the hide and tying it up, do not pull it too tight. Leave some flexibility in the material and structure to move a tiny bit with the wind. Also, if you pull the material too tightly and stretch it around the door zip, it can place undue strain on the zip and make it difficult to unzip and zip back up easily. This is not good as it makes entering and leaving a bit fiddly, rather than just the smooth operation of the zip.

Pop-up hides will typically have three sides of zipped windows, and the last side is a large zip entrance or door. When setting up the hide, make sure you put the door at the most easily accessible point as you walk towards the hide and away from the direction of the feeder. To the side or rear is fine. The trick here is to have it set up so you can quietly slip into it with little disturbance.

Countless times I have seen a grey squirrel on the feeder as I am walking toward the hide. Typically I crouch and stalk to the hide, using it to break the line of sight from the grey squirrel to me. Then it's simply a case of quietly entering the hide, so you want to ensure you can do so with as much stealth as possible. Once in the hide, set up your shooting stick and seat, load your rifle and slowly unzip the window facing the feeder.



With all other windows and doors now zipped up, the pop-up provides a dark hiding place for the shooter

Sure enough, most of the time the squirrel will still be there, blissfully unaware of your presence. Its lack of attention is its undoing.

HIDING IN A HIDE

There is one consideration if using a pop-up hide, and that is your seat. If your shooting seat is tall, the windows in the hide will not be high enough for you to target the feeder downrange. So, there is a relationship between the height of the shooter's head and how far up the windows go.

Sometimes it is possible to lay some thick fallen branches under the hide to heighten the window a few inches on the side facing the feeder, but it's not an ideal fix. Another option is to dig a little inside the hide so that the seat sits lower. A more pragmatic approach is not to use a seat that is too tall in the first place.

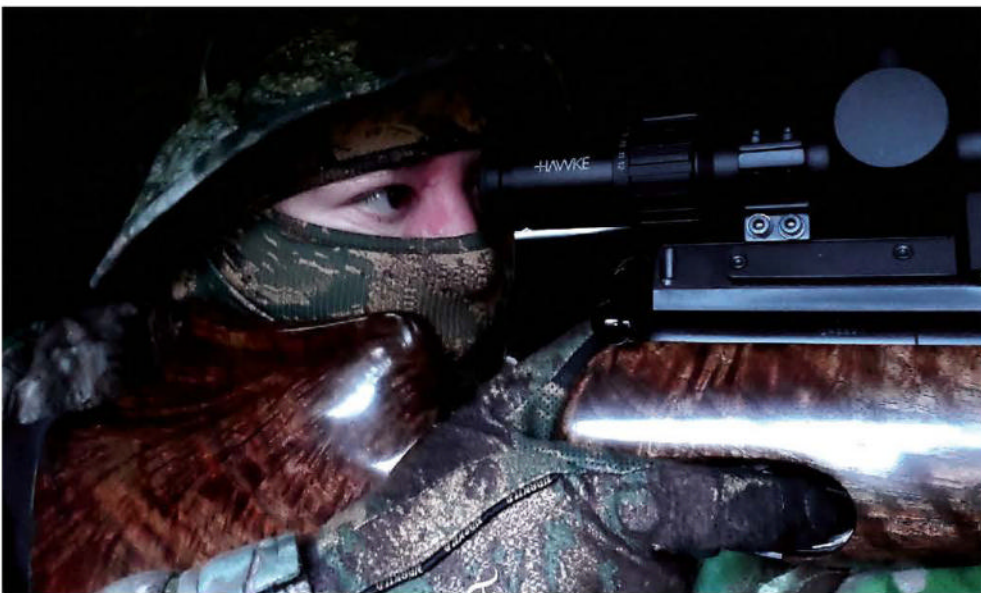
Believe it or not, but even once set up there is a fieldcraft to actually using a pop-up hide. As with all methods of hide shooting, its job is to 'hide' you. For grey squirrels and rabbits,

you do not need to worry too much about the hide itself being overly 'hidden'. These animals tend not to care too much, at least as far as woodland shooting goes.

“THIS WAS FRUSTRATING, BUT I THINK I WILL BE KEPT BUSY HERE FOR A WHILE”



This is what the grey squirrel will see when on the feeder looking back towards the shooting hide



Once JDJ was all set up inside the pop-up hide, it was time to go to work on the greys

I like pop-up hides that have a dark lining in them, as they tend to be excellent at preventing the light from penetrating into the hide and thus provide a dark sanctuary for the shooter. One tip is not to open all the windows at the same time. Although this can provide an excellent all-round view of your area, this will add too much light into the hide and your human shape will be easy to see.

I only ever unzip one window that has been set up specifically to face the feeder region. Following on from this, I don't unzip this window all the way down – I only open the window just enough to target the area I've selected without impeding the rifle and muzzle – no more. Another top tip is to sit as far back in the hide as you can relative to the open window.

This serves two purposes. One is that, again, it will keep the shooter away from more of the direct light. The other is you want as little of the air rifle as possible poking out of the hide. If you are too far forward and close to the window you might give away movement cues that will be signalling your presence to everything around you. It does not matter that you are not targeting woodpigeon or corvids – if you spook them, everything else in the area goes on high alert!

HONEY, I'M HOME

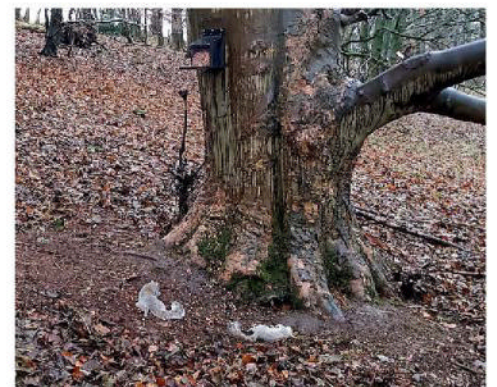
Returning to these woods was like returning home. I'd spent many hours here hitting the greys hard and now, after a 12-month hiatus, I was back.

Grey squirrels are typically active and feed early in the morning and in the evening, but during the winter months you can see differences in their behaviour. They always feed in the early morning unless the weather prohibits it, but later in the day they can be active from about 1pm through until around 3pm as they make the most of what winter daylight there is. Wildlife trail cameras had also shown activity in line with this winter feeding pattern, and so I decided to be in the woods for midday, then to sit and wait.

On arrival all was quiet and so I approached the feeder and topped it up, also putting some nuts and seed on the platform of the feeder. This brings the birds in and signals to the squirrels that all is safe. Then it was back to the hide. I placed my bucket seat towards the rear of the hide and set up my Primos shooting stick for targeting the feeder. I loaded the rifle, checked my zero, settled in and waited. I did not have to wait long before the first grey squirrel came running in for its lunch.

This being early January, grey squirrels were chasing each other through the woods as they had romance on their minds. If you see this behaviour, it is the males chasing the females – she is trying to see if he is suitable to mate with. Two came charging towards the feeder tree and one went straight onto the feeder. It took a peanut, settled and started to nibble. I don't need more of an invitation than this. One down.

The other was sitting on a large branch to the side and saw the fall of its comrade, but also noticed the feeder was available and capitalised on this opportunity. Two down. I could also see a fair bit of activity in the trees in the distance, but it was out of range. "This is going to be a good session," I thought. However, I had to bring the session to an abrupt end due to spotting a trespasser in the distance. I had to go and deal with that, and on my return I saw plenty of activity in the tree canopy, but the squirrels were all spooked. This was frustrating, but I think I will be kept busy here for a while. ●



Two showed up for lunch and two were taken, but there is plenty more work for JDJ to do here





THE THREAT TO LEAD

Jim Old looks at the current proposals to ban the use of lead ammunition and the impact it could have on our sport

Airgunning as we know it could be under threat. The sport is facing a challenge that some believe puts its very future on the line. The threat is not to our guns, but to our ammo.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is consulting on the use of lead ammunition as part of its UK REACH programme, which will regulate the industrial use and importation of chemicals. It's currently proposing a near-complete ban on the outdoor use of lead projectiles.

This ban could quickly affect all forms of shooting, from centrefire and rimfire rifles through to shotguns. But it's arguable that if the UK REACH proposals go through unchanged, then airgun users will be among the worst affected.

LOVELY LEAD?

Lead has been used in the creation of small arms ammunition since the 15th century. It's

Lead ingestion can cause a range of conditions in wild and farm animals, as well as pets. The Game and Wildlife Trust (GWCT) accepts that wild birds do eat spent lead ammunition, particularly if fired from shotgun cartridges, mistaking it for food or grit that they ingest to aid their digestion. This leads to poisoning or death. Birds or animals shot with lead ammunition, but not killed, will suffer from its toxicity.

HUMAN HEALTH

Scientists first woke up to the dangers of lead poisoning in humans in the 1960s. It was found to be linked to poor cognitive development in children, neurological problems in adults, fertility issues, chronic fatigue, digestive complications and, in extreme cases, death. Leaded petrol was banned around the world, and lead water pipes are still being dug up and replaced. It's an indisputable fact that lead is toxic, but it's not a given that lead airgun ammo does any harm in itself.

“LEAD IS TOXIC, BUT IT'S NOT A GIVEN THAT LEAD AIRGUN AMMO DOES ANY HARM IN ITSELF”

fairly cheap and widely available. A low melting point means it's easy to work. The metal is soft, so it forms itself into the rifling of our barrels without damaging them. It deforms easily on impact, helping us to deliver quick and humane kills. And of course, it's dense and heavy. As such, a lead (or lead alloy) airgun pellet holds onto its energy well while being fired through the air.

However, lead is also a toxin, being hazardous to animal and human health. This is why it finds itself on the HSE's naughty list. Let's deal with animals first.

CONSULTATION

We need to be clear on what UK REACH is proposing. As things stand, its position is that all lead ammunition should be banned for outdoor use within five years of implementation. One ray of hope is that it has extended its consultation period, inviting input from shooting bodies. The British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC) has taken advantage of this opportunity. Its East of England director, Terry Behan, says the organisation is firmly opposed to a ban on lead airgun ammunition. “The current UK REACH proposals are likely to have a significant impact on the ability to conduct humane shooting of small game and vermin species, and on outdoor target shooting,” he says.

SHOOTING ADVICE

There are two main planks to BASC's case. Firstly, it argues that a ban would be disproportionate and unnecessary because the risk to human health from lead airgun ammo is negligible. Secondly, it's concerned that the non-lead airgun ammunition currently available is unsuitable for most serious airgun applications.

ACCURACY WORRIES

BASC has put together a technical report to present to the UK REACH consultation. It includes the results of accuracy testing with lead-free pellets at 25 and 50m in both .177 and .22, plus muzzle energy testing with both calibres. The results raised eyebrows.

"Our testing supports concerns that the current non-lead airgun pellets may not be universally effective for target shooting or the humane shooting of live quarry," says Terry.

The testing was carried out at the end of last year by Basingstoke Air Rifle and Pistol Club (BARPC). BASC sent the club a range of all the commercially available lead-free airgun ammo it could find at the time. It's worth noting that only .177 and .22 ammunition could be purchased – nothing was for sale in the .20, .25 and .30 calibres. BARPC member Si Barker was asked to put together a testing programme.

"We were keen to make it as scientific as possible, but keep it grounded in real-world conditions," he says. "All the pellets, both lead and non-lead, would be expected to perform better if we'd shot indoors and minimised the effect of wind drift, but that's not where most pellets are fired. We wanted to see how they performed outdoors."

TESTING TIMES

At purchase, there were 23 varieties of lead-free .177 ammunition listed on the websites of three major UK retailers. However, only six were in stock, and just four were available in sufficient quantities to test.

Those four types of .177 non-lead ammo were fired over 25m by the BARPC team from a range of airguns, both springers and PCPs, resulting in 11 different test results.

BASC has enlisted the help of Basingstoke Air Rifle and Pistol Club to help carry out the ammo tests



For comparison, the same guns were used to shoot four different kinds of lead pellets. The findings can be found in the technical report on the BASC website. In a nutshell, the results were mixed. Seven of the 11 lead-free pellet/rifle combinations

The average 25m group size for the lead pellets was 25.31mm. The figure for the lead-free varieties was 35.54mm – more than a centimetre larger and well outside BASC's 30mm guideline.

GROUPS OF THE LEAD PELLETS WERE A LOT SMALLER THAN THEIR LEAD-FREE EQUIVALENTS

managed to achieve groups smaller than 30mm. BASC's airgun hunting guidelines state that to be considered suitable for shooting live quarry, a combination should be able to consistently group under 30mm.

It should be said that some of the non-lead pellets, BSA Green Star and H&N Baracuda Green, performed well at this range, and two of the tested lead pellet/rifle combinations failed to group under 30mm. However, once the results were averaged out, we were given a more complete picture.

BSA's Green Star pellets performed very well in the tests, but the performance of all non-lead ammo suffered at longer ranges

LONGER RANGES

Sadly, the testing of lead-free ammunition in .22 calibre was compromised by a lack of available varieties. In the end, the BSA Green Star .22 pellets were used in a variety of air

rifles and compared against a couple of well-known lead pellets in the same guns.

The Green Stars had performed well at 25m in .177, but this was not replicated in the larger calibre. They also failed to achieve the all-important sub-30mm groups with any of the guns used. The .22 Green Stars managed an average group size of 38.33mm, compared to the 25.66mm achieved by the lead pellets.

The testing range was then extended to 50m for both calibres and ammunition types. To sum it up, none of the pellets, either lead or lead-free, managed to achieve sub-30mm groups at this range.

That said, the average group sizes of the lead pellets were a lot smaller than their lead-free equivalents. In .177, the lead-free average group size was 63.8mm versus 47.7mm for lead ammo.



Overall, the accuracy testing left Si Barker and his BARPC clubmates worried. "We've all heard horror stories as to how bad non-lead pellets perform, accuracy-wise," he says. "Some of the ones we tested performed ok out to 25m. They'd be fine for plinking at close quarters, but they've a way to go to get close to the consistency of lead pellets."

LOW ENERGY

BASC was keen to test the muzzle energy of the available non-lead ammo; in other words, the power carried by the pellet as it leaves the gun. BASC guidelines state that sub-legal-limit air rifles are only suitable for small game hunting if they produce at least 11 ft-lb of muzzle energy. In theory, sub-legal-limit, non-power-adjustable airguns release the same volume of compressed air every time we pull the trigger. It's the weight of the pellet being fired that is the major variable. A lighter pellet will have less muzzle energy than a heavier one. And herein lies another problem with lead-free ammunition.

Most of the non-lead pellets tested were made from an alloy of zinc and tin. Two varieties had a bit of iron and plastic thrown into the mix. Zinc and tin have lower densities than lead. Whatever they're made of, airgun pellets of a given calibre are largely the same size, and so it follows that lead-free pellets are going to be lighter than their lead alloy equivalents. BASC found the average weight of the tested non-lead pellets was 6.04gr, 33% lighter than the lead versions.

So how did the lead-free pellets perform in testing? In a word, badly. None of them managed to meet the 11 ft-lb requirement, and the average muzzle energy was just 9.7 ft-lb. From BASC's point of view, this is damning. While some of the lead-free pellets passed the short-range accuracy threshold, none of them carried enough energy to make them suitable for airgun hunting.

Terry says the testing confirmed BASC's concerns and made it more determined to oppose the UK REACH proposals. "BASC has put forward a strong case evidencing the lack of efficiency in the current stock of non-lead pellets. While airgunners have every right to be concerned about the current proposals, BASC will continue to fight for our members and work towards finding a solution."

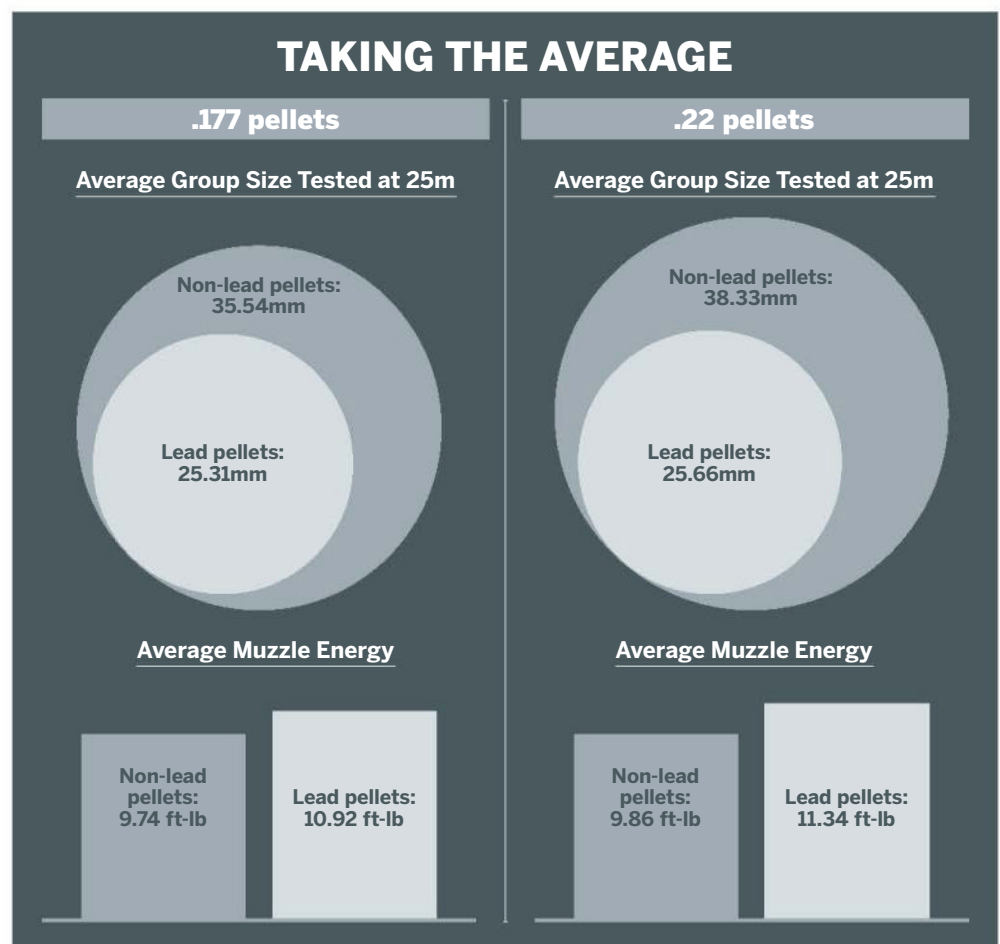
So we airgunners face a nightmarish double-bubble of worries over our ammo – a possible ban on lead pellets at a time when the lead-free alternatives don't seem to be up to scratch. But the story doesn't end there. ●

NEXT TIME: BASC investigates the potential human health impact of lead airgun ammo, fears over supply and demand for lead-free pellets, and Jim carries out his own testing.

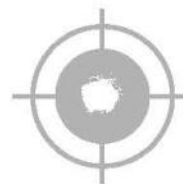


BASC's East of England director Terry Behan says that the organisation is firmly opposed to a ban on lead airgun ammunition

TAKING THE AVERAGE



TARGET SHOOTER



INSIGHT AND EXPERTISE TO HELP YOU RAISE YOUR GAME



Outdoor shooting introduces a series of different challenges such as range estimation and dealing with the effects of the wind

OUTDOOR SHOOTING

SPRING INTO ACTION!

Like many shooters, **Andy McLachlan** spent much of the winter indoors, but is now itching to head outside for some airgun action

YOUR EXPERT

ANDY McLACHLAN



It's strange the things you tend to notice as you get older. For decades, the sprouting of new life in springtime was just something that I took for granted and used as an indication that our world was once again becoming warmer. Spring raised its head from its winter slumber and reactivated nature into colour with the welcome scent of newly sprouting life all around us.

As a practical outdoors person, the warming season means it's time to consider venturing out into our beautiful countryside again with either a rod, or more likely a gun, in search of a few hours of peace.

It's not that I don't enjoy the friendly banter of a good indoor range shooting session, it's just that quality time spent outdoors seems to recharge my batteries a little bit more quickly than occurs following a few hours of indoor action.

Shooting within the confines of a well-equipped indoor range, especially one that has a heating system that actually works (take note, some clubs) is an excellent way of settling the mind for those of us who are confirmed shooters during the cold winter months. I can recall a few sessions at my local indoor range when the fingers of some of my fellow shooters were literally blue with cold, which does absolutely nothing for fine trigger control!

A HAPPY SHOOTER

A warm and comfortable shooter is a happy shooter for obvious reasons, and is far more likely to return. It is up to the shooting establishment to make sure that not only do their customers feel safe, they also don't feel it necessary to dress in electrically heated suits, as I was made aware of this winter gone.

As I write, the sun is making a welcome appearance in the garden. It's causing me to consider my options for more outdoor shooting during the coming season. You really can't beat spending quality time outdoors with a gun, in my opinion. Decades ago that would have meant looking forward to numerous sessions hunting small game and pests with my air rifles, shotguns and rimfire rifles.

I always look back at those times with a smile as I made the most of the opportunities I had, even involving my sons and other young people as I tried to pass on my experience to a younger generation.

As regular readers will be aware, these days my old bones will usually be found behind a bench doing my best to slot .177 pellets into tiny targets at long distances. This new-found interest has certainly enthused a lot of us within our own locality, and the level of competition continues to

rise as our equipment and techniques continue to develop. The highest recorded score for our 53-yard indoor league is now a quite amazing 246, with my own best recorded match score still 13 points behind on 233.

ALLURE OF THE OUTDOORS

Considerable time, effort and enjoyment has been spent in the pursuit of that perfect score, but with the advent of spring, I can feel the allure of the outdoors. In particular, our Rivington club's outdoor shooting range at Turton has once again become a serious attraction for many of us within the club, and other clubs for that matter.

Within my own club, we have decided that once some additional repairs have been carried out on our indoor range facility, we intend to concentrate upon further developing the Turton outdoor facility.

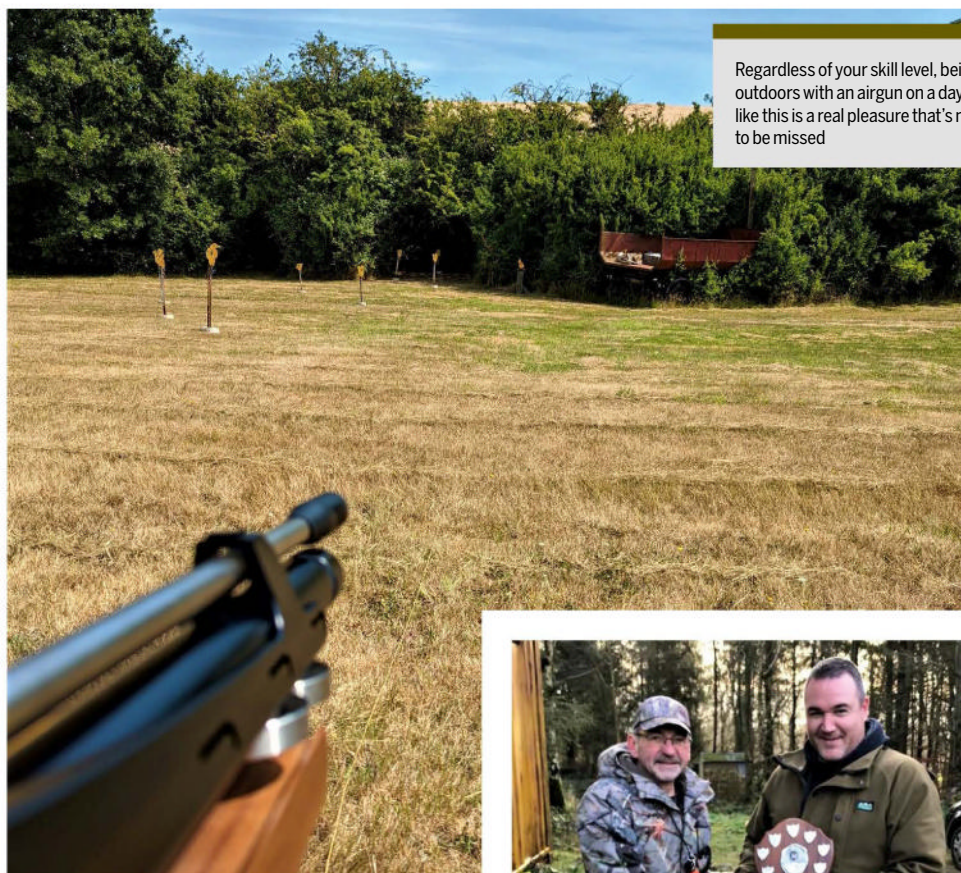
We want to make it so that it allows our new members (and we seem to be attracting quite a few at present) the opportunity of looking through their scopes in horror and disbelief as the wind manages to drop their carefully calculated shot solution a few inches away from their intended point of impact.

For those who have not experienced true outdoor shooting at distances of up to 55 yards, the wind is yet another factor that needs to be taken into account when assessing what the pellet will do once it's left the barrel. If you think it is bad at 25 yards, just imagine what kind of effect the wind is having on a pellet that has lost much of its terminal velocity at double that distance and beyond.

“THAT IS PURELY DOWN TO EXPERIENCE, AND CAN TAKE A LONG TIME TO LEARN”

It has to be said that many of my fellow club members and I have enjoyed some serious fun shooting at things like swaying Polo mints (you are not forgotten, Ian) or even cleverly suspended pans placed 100 yards away or more. With a muzzle energy below 12 ft-lb, it's always going to be a challenge to shoot consistently well at longer ranges, but believe me, it certainly is fun and swiftly builds up the competition as the participants don't want to be outdone by their fellow members.

Talking of outdoor competition, if you fancy more formal events, don't forget the many clubs that offer the outdoor shooter the opportunity of getting involved in serious competitive shooting via organised Hunter Field Target (HFT) or Field Target.



Regardless of your skill level, being outdoors with an airgun on a day like this is a real pleasure that's not to be missed

This offers the keen airgunner the opportunity of spending time outdoors trying to work out, in the case of HFT, the range to the target and the wind speed and direction, as well as the skill of holding your rifle so as you don't induce any parallax error prior to letting the shot go.

Field Target does allow the ranging of targets using the parallax rangefinding abilities of the specialist high-magnification scopes, but still cannot allow for any windage that might be needed to correctly calculate the individual firing solution. That is purely down to experience, and can take a long time to learn and become accustomed to, often knocking the confidence of a beginner until they learn the basics. Watching somebody who is genuinely good at shooting in the wind, like my son James, can be an eye-opener, particularly when they tell you how far off they were aiming at that 45-yard target on the other side of the valley!

GETTING OUTDOORS

Yes, I am looking forward to getting outdoors once again once the weather has turned for the better. Our club also has intentions to develop our outdoor benchrest facility to allow for our indoor long-range stuff to be taken outdoors,



Hard work pays off, and James was awarded the Fort Airgun Club GP Trophy following good use of his range and wind-reading skills

where all of those lovely wind issues will come into play! That will certainly set the cat among the pigeons, as we all no doubt try to time our shots when the breeze drops to sensible amounts and record scores without our shots being blown off the target card, as I anticipate in some cases.

The intention is to invite our friends from other clubs along to appreciate not only the Turton outdoor HFT courses, but also for oldies like me who prefer the comforts of a solid bench to have a crack at long-range 6mm bull benchrest target cards. For those who haven't tried it and consider themselves to be half-decent shots, I can't wait to see their shocked faces! ●



Twelve-year-old Archie signs in at the range for the first of what Andy hopes will be many such visits

NEW AIRGUNNERS

YOUNG GUNS

Andy McLachlan reflects on how his own airgunning adventure began as he heads to the range with a very keen newcomer

I can't remember when I wasn't either directly or indirectly involved in some form of shooting. As a child, I took a great deal of interest in all of my toy guns and just couldn't wait to get hold of a 'real' one. This came to pass when I was about 12, on holiday in Cornwall with my brother and parents.

The owner of the guest house we used to stay at once showed me what I think was a Light Pattern BSA from the pre-WWII period. To say I was keen to shoot it was an understatement, and it didn't take long for my brother and I to buy ourselves tins of the classic orange-labelled Eley Wasp pellets.

We would spend hours shooting old Airfix plastic models and various other reactive targets, and this made a profound impression on my love of all things air rifle,

even above and beyond that of the firearms I have owned and used over the decades. In my opinion, for what it's worth, you really can't beat just enjoying yourself either on the shooting range or in the field with a sub-12 foot-pound air rifle. Additional power is good for many shooting applications, but the ability to just pick up your gun and use it legally and safely without having to jump through hoops is all part of the fun for me.

As a tool for instilling both the basic shooting skills and of course the all-important safety considerations to a novice shooter, be they young or not so young, you really cannot beat an air rifle, particularly if it happens to be a spring-powered one. Still, the PCP is fantastic for allowing a total novice the opportunity of producing good results as, let's face it,

they are much easier to shoot than the mechanical equivalent, which always tries to pull the shooter away from good results with its double-recoil bounce.

I have been blessed with three sons that took an interest in their Dad's shooting hobby throughout their lifetimes so far, with one of them still being as keen as myself, which is really nice. In addition to my own sons, I have also been responsible for tutoring lots of other young people into our wonderful hobby, with many of them still retaining an interest and shooting on a regular basis to this day.

GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

This brings with it great responsibility, as the teacher must make sure that the student is fully aware of just how dangerous any device that shoots a projectile can be. The big issue is barrel awareness and making sure that it is never pointing in an unsafe direction. This is of course before we even get into the necessary requirements of how to deliver an accurate shot, including trigger control and the positioning of the gun.

I can still vividly remember the occasion, over half a century ago now, when I took my first shot with that ancient BSA. The feeling of the gun being alive as its workings uncoiled and came to a sudden stop while I watched along the barrel's length to see where the shot had impacted upon the target, a plastic Spitfire. I was hooked from that moment on by a hobby that has provided so much over the years and continues to do so.

Anyway, a conversation with an old friend regarding a young man who is very interested in learning to shoot came about recently. Archie is the same age as I was when I first picked up a gun, about 12. Having known both Archie and the rest of his family for a long time now, I was well aware of how much interest he had taken with the use of his vast collection of Nerf guns since he was first able to use one. Like me, the use of objects representing guns was all that was possible within the confines of a normal home.

I was then faced with a dilemma regarding the type of gun I should use with which to put Archie through his paces first time out. On one hand, the use of spring power would provide much-needed basic skills due to the requirements of the correct gun hold and trigger follow-through to get the best out of a mechanically powered action.

However, I wanted an easier return for Archie's efforts the first time he shot, and decided that a PCP would suffice for now. The lack of recoil would allow him to shoot more accurately and give him a far more positive initial experience.



Andy was impressed by how accurately Archie was shooting, with these targets being placed 53 yards away

was lasting Archie about a minute at best, was costing around £1.50, we then decided it was time for him to concentrate upon achieving individual accurate shot delivery at 53-yard targets.

Thinking that this might be a step too far, I was proved very wrong when Archie started to produce groups that genuinely amazed me. I was so proud of him that it brought a tear to my eye as I watched him hit the mark time after time with a gun he hadn't even seen before that day. Clearly, Archie is a natural shot.

Archie has a lot of talent, and I truly hope that he both continues to enjoy shooting in the future and is willing to join the old men down at the range and provide us all with a good pasting on a regular basis when he's old enough.

If you know somebody who is expressing an interest in getting into the type of shooting that we do, make sure to take them along to a suitable venue, and just sit back and watch their faces as they start hitting the target. It is worth going along just for that! ●

It didn't take long before Archie got used to the FX and was shooting the Impact in rapid-fire mode!

Considering that I used what will shortly be classed as a genuine antique single-shot spring-powered air rifle as my own introduction into the wonderful world of shooting, my friend Dave and I, who discussed the issue at length, came to the conclusion that Archie's first time out should be with a gun that provides fast-fire accurate fun. Enter the FX Impact with its 38-round magazine of recoilless enjoyment! It did make me smile when I considered just how far the design of the modern air rifle has come compared to the examples from the early 20th century.

LATEST AND GREATEST

So it was that Dave, Archie and myself arrived at the Leigh indoor shooting range armed with the latest and greatest of modern airgunning equipment. Archie was genuinely very attentive when I first sat him down in his shooting lane and explained the basic safety considerations, and how the range officer would provide us all with further instructions.

Like many new shooters, I think Archie was surprised at just how strict shooting protocols must be if accidents are to be reduced to zero, and it is the job of the range officer to make sure that we are all kept safe at all times.

Once we had set the gun up for Archie, moving the scope into a proper position and making sure his head was correctly positioned upon the stock, it didn't take long for him to start hitting the 25-yard target cards. After telling me how he was regularly hitting the red bull of the Shoot-N-See targets, I looked through the scope myself and was surprised at just how tight the groups were.

As the session progressed, Dave and I continued to give each other surprised looks as the mid- and then long-range spinners were being hit just as fast as Archie could cycle the magazine. The contents of Archie's new tin of ammunition

“ARCHIE WAS SURPRISED AT JUST HOW STRICT SHOOTING PROTOCOLS MUST BE”

were being launched downrange at record speed, and we then had to call a halt to the fast-fire fun available from today's £2,000 multi-shot rifle combination.

Pointing out that each of the pellets cost about 4p, and a magazine's worth, which



In addition to the Impact, Archie got to shoot this Walther LG400, and he particularly appreciated the match trigger

TARGET SHOOTER



The Primos Trigger Stick is one of the most popular sticks out there, but its inventors probably never imagined it being used for HFT

MOBILITY AIDS

STICK WITH IT!

Some shooters find HFT too much of a physical challenge, but **Jim Old's** club has come up with a clever way of getting everyone involved

“used to do a lot of HFT with a mate of mine,” says 75-year-old Geoff Wright. “I was spending more time helping him up off the ground than actually shooting. So we gave it up. That was about four years ago.”

But Geoff is back in the game, thanks to a decision by the Surrey-based Bisley Field Target Organisation (BFTO) to trial a new Hunter Field Target (HFT) category for its members. It allows competitors to shoot with their guns supported by sticks and removes the need for them to lie down, sit or kneel at any point on the course. Entry is not limited to those with mobility issues, but it's proving popular with the club's older members and those, like Geoff, who gave up HFT when it became too taxing.

Today sees the second round of the year for BFTO's popular HFT club event, and only the second time the new sticks category has been tried. I met some of the older shooters just after the first one, and they were so excited about it that I asked if I could accompany them next time. Geoff has already paired up with his friend Ian Causton by the time I get there, but they're happy for me to tag along. Crucially, Geoff is relaxed about allowing me to use his sticks, because I don't have any of my own.

THE COURSE

We listen to the safety brief and then head into the large expanse of woodland behind BFTO's clubhouse where the course has been set out. We'll be shooting exactly the same targets as the regular HFT competitors – 30 positions, each with a metal target placed at anything from eight to 45 yards. BFTO committee member Peter Trimmer suggested the concept, and as we walk over I chat to the man who has the task of making it a success, HFT event leader Paul Hargreaves.



BFTO's new form of HFT opens a discipline that would otherwise be closed to many shooters

"When the idea first came up I was a bit sceptical," he says. "I thought safety would be an issue, and then target placement. So we decided to set a course in our usual format, base it on UKAHFT rules and see what happened. What we found was that all, or nearly all, of the targets could be shot using sticks."

A horn blast signals that we can start shooting, so Geoff, Ian and I remove our rifles from their slips. I immediately feel a little out-gunned. I've brought my trusty Air Arms S400. I love this rifle, but it looks a little plain besides Geoff's FX Dreamline, with its beautiful GRS stock, and Ian's AA HFT500, complete with a futuristic-looking Alutec stock made by Warren Edwards.

Unlike Geoff, Ian is a newcomer to HFT. He had major spinal surgery 20 years ago which made shooting in the prone position an impossibility. I know from other BFTO competitions that Ian's an excellent shot, but now, at the age of 76, the club's new HFT category is opening up a whole new airgunning discipline for him.

I am also a complete newbie to HFT, and so I'm glad that Geoff is prepared to share his knowledge of the sport, as well as his sticks. He tells me that it's as much about range estimation as it is steady shooting. I know that I'm not allowed to adjust my scope once the competition has started, and thus manage to make my first mistake of the morning. I've forgotten to set the eyepiece of my Hawke Airmax scope to allow for my contact lenses, and so I'm forced to shoot all of the targets with a



Taking a standing shot using sticks is a fair bit easier than shooting unsupported, but still requires a good degree of skill

slightly blurry reticle, which really does nothing to help matters.

SCORING SYSTEM

The scoring system is straightforward and, like the course, identical to that used for the regular HFT shooters; two points for a hit on the target's kill zone, one for striking the surrounding metal plate and zero (or a 'doughnut') for a miss. With 30 shots to be taken, there are a maximum of 60 points available. Our little group of three is starting at position 12, where a yellow squirrel target has been placed halfway up a tree trunk quite some distance out.

"What d'you reckon then? I'm thinking 30 yards, give or take," says Geoff. Ian agrees and so do I (although I'm really not sure). I'm surprised, but also relieved that they're happy to discuss their range estimations. I expect this is the last thing that would happen among serious HFT competitors, but the stick boys seem chilled and relaxed. No one's in it to win it. HFT rules require shooters to be touching the marker peg driven into the ground at each position when they take their shot. Ian and Geoff are rather laid back about that, too.

I'm last to shoot on this first target, so I get into position behind Geoff's new sticks.



As with regular HFT, knowing your aim points is crucial, but any chart you make needs protecting



For many shooters, the physical demands of getting down on a peg to take a prone shot, then getting up again, are simply too much

TARGET SHOOTER

Apparently, he wasn't very impressed when they first arrived, and had trouble getting them to stand up. He rang Ian, who suggested he might like to remove the strap that holds the legs together when the sticks are being carried. This would allow the legs to spread out and solve his stability problems. Geoff hasn't had any issues with them since, although he has endured some mickey-taking since the story got out.

My first impression is that the sticks offer less stability than I was expecting. There's still a fair degree of gun movement as I line up on the target. It's certainly not like shooting off a bench. This is going to be more of a challenge than I expected. Geoff suggests I bring my left hand back from the rifle's forend and take hold of the grip at the top of the sticks. This definitely seems to help as I take my shot. I miss the kill zone, but hit the plate, so I get a '1' on my scorecard and I'm happy with that. We're off.

I have another problem to add to my blurry reticle. A few days ago, I stuck a holdover diagram for my Airmax/S400 combo into the lid of my pellet container. Now, however, it appears that I've used too much glue. Opening the box, I discover that it's bled through the paper and all but destroyed my little sketch. Some of the markings are visible, but others are not. I'm down to using guesswork.

BEGINNER'S LUCK

After 10 or so targets, I find a run of form and hit the kill zone four times in five shots. "Beginner's luck," I say to Geoff and Ian. I mean it. I'm finding it easier now to steady the rifle on the sticks, but unless the target happens to be at or near to my 25-yard zero, then it's largely a case of 'shoot and hope'. Geoff seems to be rediscovering his competitive side, and threatens to take me behind a tree and beat me up if I carry on doing well. I think he's joking, but either way it's all academic, as my lucky streak soon runs out.

The weather is perfect. Dry, windless and unseasonably mild. The woods are beautiful,

BFTO SCORE CARD		DATE	12/02/23					
NAME		JIM O'LEARY						
CLUB NUMBER		1502						
2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	15
1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	13
1	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	16
CLASS STICK GRADE								44
CLUB/TEAM								
WITNESS IAN CAUSTON								

You get two points for hitting the kill zone, one for striking the surrounding metal plate



Jim soon found that knowing the range to the target was as vital as taking a steady shot

and more than once we stop to admire our surroundings. "It's a great way to spend a Sunday morning," says Geoff. "We're

or clambering to their feet and dusting themselves off. It's hard not to feel a little smug that we don't have to do that. We joke about turning up to shoot next time dressed in dinner jackets and bow ties.

Paul Hargreaves comes over to check on our progress as we near the end of the course. He's visibly relieved that the round has gone well, and in particular that all the stick shooters have been able to see the targets, some of which are slightly obscured by foliage. I ask him if he worries that the addition of a sticks category waters down the HFT competition. "I don't think so, as long as the courses are built as normal. And if it takes off," he adds, "perhaps courses could be built purely for stick shooters."

I mention that those taking part appear to be enjoying themselves and seem enthused about being able to get involved in HFT again. Paul says it's important that the BFTO adapts to stay relevant to all its members. "Hopefully, when shooters find getting up and down harder through age or medical conditions, they now feel they can continue in the sport," he says.

Back at the clubhouse, with mugs of tea in hand, the stick shooters compare their scores and discuss their tricky targets. "We need a name for our little group," says someone. Everyone stares at me. I stare back. "Come on, Jim," says Geoff, "you're

supposed to be good with words." But my mind, as it often is these days, is blank. It's only on the drive home that inspiration strikes: 'The Sticklers'.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THE BFTO ADAPTS TO STAY RELEVANT TO ALL ITS MEMBERS

getting some exercise, more than we would if we were just shooting off a bench." All around us, the regular HFT competitors are sprawled on the ground taking shots,



Jim was a novice when it came to HFT, but picked up plenty of tips and tricks after shooting the course with Geoff and Ian



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AIMING HIGH

Is it really worth splashing out on an ultra high-end set of mounts for your air rifle? Ray Garner says yes – as long as money is no object

From the very first time that some inventive pilgrim dreamed up the idea of using a telescope as a rifle sight, numerous, equally inventive types have sought to devise clever systems for fixing one to a gun. Gorilla Glue and Duck Tape won't win you any friends in this venture, but a dab hand at science and mechanical engineering might get you there.

Over the ages, all kinds of mechanical marvels have come and gone, and some of them even worked. Many originated in the United States, or in Germany and Austria, while in the UK we had the likes of Parker Hale, with its light alloy mounts, and from Australia came Hillver's all-steel items. Indeed, most industrial nations from every corner of the globe have at some time had a crack at fulfilling this particular need.

Many years ago, I had a spring-operated air rifle that had an acutely snappy recoil.

None of the flimsy, inexpensive mounts that were available to me at that time would hold the scope in place, and it would move about and affect accuracy worse than bent pellets. Today, things are different and far better for air rifle shooters. With some rifle scopes costing many hundreds of pounds and a few more running to thousands, it is

THE PICATINNY RAIL AS A MOUNTING OPTION DOES AWAY WITH ANY AMBIGUITY

perhaps worth spending extra on mounts of equivalent quality to the optics. While there are some excellent mounts readily available for very reasonable prices, here is a look at some of the best telescopic sight mounts you can buy if money is no object.

A part of the problem for mount-makers is the sheer number of riflemakers that

have their own particular requirements or variations on a standard arrangement for attaching a scope to their products. You only have to look at the EAW (Ernst Apel Wetzlar) catalogue to get an idea of the massive range of mounts that it produces to meet the varied needs of riflemakers. Not only do the attachment methods vary, but so do the scope tube diameters, with sizes ranging from 22mm right through to 34mm, and sometimes even bigger.

Some attempt at standardising the scope rails on air rifles occurred quite a few years back, with riflemakers agreeing on an 11mm wide dovetail. This dimension, as it turned out, was simply a nominal size, with some being cut at 12mm width and some as small as 10.5mm. That variation does make a difference when a precise fit is required.

The more recent adoption of the Picatinny rail as a mounting option does away with any ambiguity regarding dimensions, as the design standards and tolerances are very precisely defined, providing a truly unified standard. The Picatinny system does work very well, although some consider it to be a bit of an ugly bug on a finely crafted sporter.

RECKNAGEL

German mount-maker Recknagel has made mounts of the highest quality since 1867. The catalogue runs to 56 pages, with hundreds of mounts to suit all manner of applications for numerous rifles. The air rifle mounts are superb, and in my opinion are among the best available.

Recknagel makes 16 different mounts for the 11mm rail, with ring mount diameters from 26mm up to 40mm. The company makes a further four mounts for use with rail-mounted scopes, and even more if you favour the Picatinny system.



Recknagel also makes quick-detach mounts, these being designed with a dovetail fitting

(Credit: Alan Rhône)



Ray's Diana P1000 has been fitted with an unconventional sighting system in the form of a Recknagel base and an Aimpoint sight



EAW/Apel may have been founded back in 1919, but that hasn't hampered progress as these astonishing 3D-printed mounts testify



This EAW one-piece mount is designed for use with an 11mm dovetail, and has been fitted to a Weihrauch HW100

All are very cleverly designed and beautifully made from steel and aluminium. The bases are exceptional and possibly unique, inasmuch as they have built-in windage adjustment, and also a system which allows for minor deviations beyond the 11mm standard, ensuring a perfect, undistorted fit of the clamping pieces onto the dovetail.

Additionally, some of the products in this range also have a removable recoil stop screw for use on rifles with transverse grooves cut into the rifle dovetail, Feinwerkbau-style. Interestingly, Recknagel also makes mounts of outstanding quality for



Two-piece Recknagel mounts have been used on this HW100 – note the windage screw and the one to adjust the width to fit the dovetail



The scope has been attached to the rifle using an EAW base made of steel, with the rings being made from alloy

attaching red dot sights to 11mm dovetails, one of which uses lever-operated clamps that lock up very securely.

EAW (ERNST APEL WETZLAR)

This is another German maker of mounts of the highest quality. EAW, sometimes referred to as simply Apel, has been around for a very long time and truly knows its business, producing a very extensive range of mounts for 11mm dovetails and for Picatinny rails. The top-end mounts are the two-piece type, which have steel bases with screw-operated clamps and separate aluminium rings of various sizes.

As with the Recknagel equivalents, they are available with built-in windage adjustment, but do not have the variable dovetail width function. By some uncanny coincidence, EAW rings and bases are completely interchangeable with those of the same type from Recknagel.

EAW also makes several one-piece mounts for air rifles, which comprise a single base with two clamps and a pair of rings for a very solid arrangement. These come with a removable drop-down recoil stud intended to engage with holes in the rifle spring chamber, as might be found on some Air Arms, Weihrauch and early Anschütz springers, making them entirely suitable for recoiling air rifles. At one time EAW made rings as small as 19mm diameter, but in recent years dropped them from its catalogue. EAW also makes bases for attaching red dot sights to air rifles, and for attaching railed scopes to both Picatinny and dovetail grooves.

EAW/Apel is an excellent company to deal with, always responding to enquiries from customers and being helpful and polite. Remarkably, this traditional maker claims to be the first to make a mount completely by means of 3D printing!



Ray has equipped his Steyr LG110 with EAW two piece-mounts that are designed to be clamped to an 11mm dovetail



Swedish firm Spuhr offers some extremely heavy-duty mounting hardware like this one-piece assembly

SPUHR

This company comes from Sweden, land of the midnight sun, which has long, dark winters not much for people to do except think about inventing stuff. As a result, Spuhr produces a range of the most extraordinary designs of scope mounts this side of the Skagerrak strait.

A relative newcomer to the mount business, Spuhr's light alloy mounts have a unique look to them said to be 'sculptured industrial'. The company makes both one- and two-piece bases with multiple clamping screws for attaching to Picatinny rails, although it does produce one variation intended for the Accuracy International centrefire rifle, which has an 11mm dovetail

For the Picatinny system, Spuhr makes mounts of differing heights and tube sizes, and additionally makes dedicated mounts for specific rifles such as Blaser, Sako and

Sauer, some with a built-in bubble level for checking cant. Additionally, some of the one-piece bases are available with an elevation bias for shooting at very long ranges, saving having to wind out the scope's elevation adjustment excessively.

Unusually, the scope tube clamps are split at a 45 degree angle instead of the more usual horizontal split found on other makers' rings.

Spuhr's manufacturing quality is second to none, and this shows up at the till with some models costing over £400. Dark nights and all, that's a lot of krona.

WE REALLY ARE SPOILT FOR CHOICE IF MONEY IS NO BARRIER TO YOUR SELECTION

TIER-ONE

Located in dear old England in the industrial northlands, Tier-One, established in 2008, now offers a quite extensive range of telescopic sight mounts alongside bipods, muzzle brakes, Picatinny rails and optics levels, along with a raft of other useful and innovative accessories.

It makes aluminium alloy rings with stainless steel screws for both 11mm dovetail and Picatinny mounting, in various heights and for a range of tube sizes, all engineered to a very high standard, and complete with an integral bubble level.



With a military-sounding name like Tier-One, you might think the mounts would all be military-grade Picatinny, but these are for dovetail use

Tier-One also makes a one-piece mount that it calls the Monomount. This is again machined out of billet alloy, and fitted with an anti-cant bubble to keep things straight and level. Particularly interesting are the QD Tacrings, with lever-operated quickly detachable clamps. While these are intended for military applications, there is no reason why they won't work on air rifles if the convenience of tool-less operation appeals. Both of these types are intended for Picatinny mounting.

All of Tier-One's products are available to order from their own web shop in the town of Heckmondwike. That's a great name – we should all live there.

THE OTHERS

Don't put your wallet away just yet, because there are still a few more worth talking about. Contessa is based in Italy, a nation of excellent mechanics, with a long history of gunmaking. If you can put a spanner on it, then Contessa will make it.

The company produces a few mounts for the 11mm to 12mm dovetail, in various ring sizes and heights, and makes many more for the Picatinny system, all in a design remarkably similar to Tier-One and of equally exceptional quality.

Another maker for consideration is the German firm of Henneberger. It appears not to make mounts for the 11mm dovetail, but it does make a good number for the Weaver rail system, which is closely similar to Picatinny, though it is not identical. These include a very smart and quite expensive

(about £260) quick-release item with a lever-operated clamping mechanism. Henneberger also makes bases for mounting various red dot sights such as those from Aimpoint and Docter.

WHICH TO CHOOSE?

We really are spoilt for choice if money is no barrier to your selection. They are all beautifully made and will enhance any high-quality telescopic or red dot sight. My personal favourite of the lot might well be Spuhr, but I'm not completely sure. They are all truly excellent. ●

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ORIGINAL INNOVATION

Phil Hooper continues his analysis of the Original airgun brand and its eventual return to Diana in 1984

In my previous article, I described the history of the Original brand of airguns, as manufactured by Mayer & Grammelspacher between 1950 and 1984. I homed in on the Original Model 35, which I owned from 1963, and also mentioned the popular Model 27. I shall now recap the other models that were marketed in the UK according to my 1962 brochure.

The range started with the Model 1, 15 and 16, all of which were .177 smoothbore airguns for younger boys, but featuring proper blued steel and wooden stocks. The Model 22, 23 and 25 were of more solid construction, with rifled barrels and seamless steel tube cylinders rather than folded steel designs. The Model 27 was a little larger and heavier than the Model 25 and featured a more sophisticated trigger design.

Only the Model 25 and above were available in .22 calibre. The Model 50b underlever rifle, albeit in an updated configuration, is described later on. There were two air pistols, the Model 2 Gat pattern (which was also manufactured and marketed by Milbro as the Diana Model 2) and the Model 5, a 16in long, 2lb 12oz pistol of 'cut-down rifle' configuration. Early Model 5s had a hardwood stock, but this was soon replaced with a nylon version.

RECOILLESS

By the early 1970s the model range appears to have been slimmed down somewhat, with the brochure listing just the Model 23, 25, 27, 35 and 50, but it also included the recoilless Model 65. The Model 5 pistol was still available, but was now joined by the Model 6 recoilless version, again utilising the innovative Giss, which I'll describe later.

A decade after acquiring the Original Model 35 that I described in detail in my previous article, I was planning my second purchase from the Original stable.

THE FINEST IN THE WORLD – BECAUSE THEY'RE MADE THAT MUCH BETTER

THE IDEAL AIR RIFLES FOR TEACHING YOUNGSTERS TO SHOOT SAFELY.



'ORIGINAL' Model 23

Model 23 .177 rifled bore. Robust junior model, in shape and construction very similar to the universally popular and heavier model 25. Solid steel barrel. Adjustable rear sight. All metal parts blued. Highly polished full shaped dark colour stock. Overall length 36", barrel length 14", weight 4 1/4 lbs. Velocity: 480 f.p.s.



'ORIGINAL' Model 25, .177 and .22 rifled bore

This model will suit the young shooter who will appreciate a well engineered, dependable air rifle with features often found on more expensive models. Solid steel barrel, smooth working trigger mechanism of the double pull type. Sporting rear sight, with micrometer click adjustment for windage and elevation. Mount for scope fitted to rear of air chamber. Although this model is built with a very strong spring it is easily cocked. The metal parts are of blued steel and the handsome dark stock is beautifully polished. The model 25 (.177) is also available with the same adjustable double pull trigger as fitted to the model 27 which makes it ideal for target shooting.

Overall length 38", Barrel length 15 1/2", Weight 5 lbs. Velocity 540 f.p.s.



'ORIGINAL' Model 27, .177 and .22 rifled bore.

The Model 27 is fitted with the well-known special double pull trigger. Owing to its super quality, powerful construction and first class performance this model finds immediate approval and appreciation from the serious marksman. Fitted with the latest micrometer sporting rear sight and hooded foresight with mount for telescopic sight for .22 model. Overall length: 42". Barrel length 17 1/2". Weight 6 lbs. Velocity: 650 f.p.s.

SUPERB STYLING, QUALITY ENGINEERED PARTS AND ACCURACY SET THESE 'ORIGINAL' AIR PISTOLS APART FROM ALL OTHER MAKES OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION.



Model 5, .22 & .177

Six exclusive features make this the most popular Air Pistol of its class. Latest design – target grip stock – tunnel foresight with rubber shield protector – new micrometer rear sight with click adjustment for windage and elevation – double pull trigger – built in safety engages the trigger during cocking. Weight: 2 1/2 lbs. Overall length 16". Velocity 380 f.p.s.



Model 6, .177 Recoil-less

'The Ideal Match Target Air Pistol'

World's first spring air pistol without recoil or rebound. Twin piston movement ensures a function free of vibration and recoil. Reduces wear and guarantees constant accuracy. Tunnel foresight with elements. Micrometer rear sight as fitted to Model 5. Weight: 3 lbs. Overall length: 18". Velocity: 370 f.p.s. Technical data ask for special leaflet.

FOR BEST RESULTS USE ONLY "BEATALL" MARKSMAN or "RWS" pellets.

FOR POWER AND ACCURACY 'ORIGINAL' OFFER THE BEST.....

MODEL 35

.22 and .177

The combination of power and accuracy have made the Model 35 the most popular air rifle in its class. New style stock with checkered pistol grip, cheek piece and rubber butt plate. Adjustable sporting rear sight and tunnel foresight as illustrated overleaf. Mount to take telescopic sight or Micrometer peepsight. Double pull trigger mechanism, ball bearing action and adjustable, to ensure perfect let off to suit the sporting or target shooter. This model meets the requirements for a stronger and more powerful air rifle. Engineered for long life and reliability. Overall length 45". Barrel length 18 1/2", weight 7 1/2 lbs. Velocity 690 f.p.s. (.177).

NOT CLASSIFIED AS "DANGEROUS AIR WEAPONS"

☆☆☆

Original



MODEL 65

.177 Recoil-less

Double reciprocating pistons eliminate recoil, vibration, which means accelerated discharge, high initial velocity and almost flat trajectory thus no movement during and after shot has been discharged. The break type barrel is fitted with a slide lock. Absolute rigid locking of barrel is maintained shot after shot. The barrel, rifled .177 is fitted with a barrel sleeve for perfect balance. The model 65 has an excellent 2 stage trigger. Adjustable from 100-400 g (0.2 – 0.8 lbs.) Micrometer peepsight and tunnel foresight with interchangeable elements. Walnut stock with deep forend, dimple pistol grip and competition shooting. The mechanism is so designed as to make changing main spring are made of a special material that requires no maintenance. Overall length: 44". Barrel length: 19 1/2". Weight: 5 kg. (11 lbs.)

Original





Results obtained with RWS pellets. Each Mod 65 is supplied with a test target.

Back in the early 1970s, the Original break-barrel line-up was pretty healthy, with something to appeal to most shooters

VINTAGE AIRGUNS



Here's Phil's own Original Model 50 – it's not exactly a powerhouse, but it's sweet-shooting, accurate and good looking!



The Model 50 features excellent engineering and build quality – just look at the craftsmanship of the tap system

I think that Frank Dyke & Co Limited were still importing and distributing Original rifles, but I came across an enthusiast and entrepreneur based in Croydon, Surrey, who traded under the name DR & M Hughes. He directly imported BSF, Feinwerkbau, Haenel, Original, Walther and Weihrauch airguns as well as Bimoco, Dynamit Nobel (RWS) and H&N pellets. Hughes' catalogues were full of useful information for the airgun nut, and although his business was mainly via mail order, I visited him in 1974 to buy an Original Model 50 in .177. It was pre-owned but mint, and I paid £30 for it. I had seen this model in a couple of small shops around this time, but many of the other makes listed above were quite rare in the UK.

The Model 50 competed in the UK marketplace with the BSA Airsporter Mk3, 4 and 5, and the Webley Mk3, all being underlever, tap-loading designs. The Model 50 was accurate, but in .177 maybe slightly less powerful than these competitors. I still own mine, and in completely standard form it produces 7.9 ft-lb with Eley Wasps. In .22 calibre, power would be similar to my Model 35 at around 10 ft-lb.

The Model 50 is an elegant design with an extended forend to house the underlever, terminating in a schnabel tip.

Chequering to the pistol grip was heat-impressed rather than hand-cut as it had been previously. Leather piston washers were still widespread at this time, and were used in the Model 50 and many other contemporary models. Correctly lubricated, they can provide consistent performance over a very long period of time and many thousands of shots. The modest power of the Model 50 is due to other design constraints.

“IT WAS STREETS AHEAD OF WHAT WAS BEING FITTED TO ITS UK COMPETITORS OF THAT ERA”

It is a pleasant rifle to shoot, with a smooth action, quiet discharge and a good trigger, utilising a design incorporating three ball bearings. Ok, this is not in quite the same league as Weihrauch's Rekord trigger unit, and cannot be safely adjusted down to such light trigger-release weights, but it was streets ahead of what was being fitted to its UK competitors of that era.

SIGHT ELEMENTS

The '70s Model 50 came with a front sight assembly designed to take a selection of different elements, a move away from the 'four-in-one' design described earlier for the Model 35b and which had also featured on the early Model 50b. The open rear sight, with four selectable notches, was mounted well rearward of the loading tap, providing a useful 25in sight base. A precision aperture rear sight was available

at extra cost and attached to the scope rail via a thumbwheel clamp. I used my Model 50 for six-yard and 10-metre target competitions (which was later replaced by a Weihrauch 55M) with aperture sights, and for an initial foray into the emerging Field Target discipline in the very early '80s with a 4x40 scope.

For the more affluent 10-metre target shooting brigade, Feinwerkbau designed its 1960s target rifle (and pistol) to operate in a recoilless mode by having the action move rearward on a sled to counteract the recoil from the piston travel.

Anschutz delivered recoilless performance by developing single-stroke pneumatic actions for its target rifles and pistols.

Original took another, slightly different route by adopting the Giss system on the Model 60 target rifle, which was launched in 1963, and this later evolved into the Model 65 and then 66. It was also used on the Model 6 pistol and the slimmed-down, much more focused Model 10.



The underlever of the Model 50 is cleverly concealed within the neat schnabel-tipped forend

The Giss system, as applied by Original, has the front, functional piston connected via a rack and pinion arrangement to a dummy rear piston. The pinion is mounted under small, telltale circular covers on the air chamber. When cocking the rifle, which is a break-barrel design, the front piston moves back in the normal manner, and the linked rear piston moves forward.

When the trigger is squeezed, the front piston travels forward and air-cushioning is used to brake it. Simultaneously, the rear piston moves backwards and is braked because of it being linked to the front piston. The opposing motion of the two pistons results in there being no perceptible recoil felt by the shooter.

My target-shooting buddy owned an Original Model 65 that I used occasionally, and it was a superb rifle. It proved supremely accurate with an excellent trigger and was a worthy competitor to the contemporary recoilless Feinwerkbau and Anschutz models which he also owned.

IT STARTED WITH A GISS

The original Kurt Giss patent drawings show two functional pistons, arranged so as to travel towards one another, providing a higher muzzle energy potential. However, Original designers chose to deviate from this approach so that the aforementioned Model 65 I tested back in the day produced about 5.5 ft-lb, which was fine for 10-metre use.

Interestingly, John Whiscombe designed an air rifle utilising the earlier Giss arrangement to produce both 12 ft-lb and FAC versions. I examined a prototype with him in about 1981. I recall that it employed an Airsporter-type cocking lever that had to be cycled twice to cock the gun, which proved exceptionally accurate. John (sadly no longer with us) went on to hand-build rifles utilising this principle, which are prized to this day.

During the late '70s, there was a demand for higher-power sporting air rifles that resulted in the launch of the Original Model 45 and later, for those who favoured an underlever, the Model 50 T01.

My first-hand experience with Original Models 2, 5, 10, 35, 50 and 65 was soon to be extended to include the Model 45. A friend needed a powerful air rifle for not much money. I bought a .22 Model 45 cheaply because it had a bent barrel, which I straightened, a defective safety catch that I

Excellent open sights came as standard on the Model 50, while an aperture sight was an optional extra, but standard on the Model 65

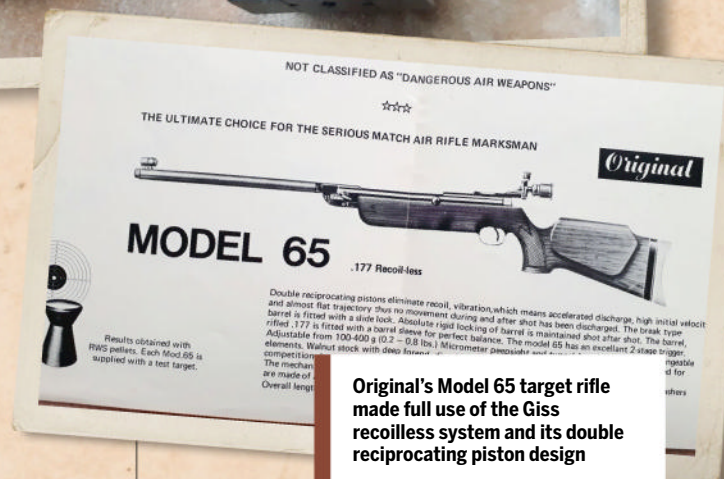


repaired and some other trivial faults which were simple to sort. It came with a half-decent scope and performed well after some overdue maintenance. It then delivered close to 11 ft-lb performance (587 fps with RWS Superdomes) with very good consistency.

The Model 45 has a transverse pin through the stock above the trigger, rather than using the front trigger guard screw to secure the action to the stock. This pin transfers the recoil from the action into the stock via two plastic, shock-absorbing bushes. With the rifle having a strong mainspring and full power potential, this seems a good idea. But two screws attach the forend rigidly to the action, which seems to defeat the object somewhat. However, the rifle shot sweetly so the package appears to work well overall.

THE TRADITION CONTINUES

Consensus views suggest the Model 50 T0, with its extended cocking lever and similar transverse recoil pin was less good than the Model 45 or the preceding, lower-powered Model 50 in terms of refinement and accuracy. Despite Original's excellent manufacturing quality, Weihrauch's break-barrel HW80 and underlever HW77



Original's Model 65 target rifle made full use of the Giss recoilless system and its double reciprocating piston design

seem generally to have been considered superior in the 1980s, with the Feinwerkbau 124/7 also recognised as one of the best full-power break-barrel rifles from the mid-1970s onwards. Hence competition was fierce in this sector too.

As mentioned in my earlier article, following the demise of Milbro, Mayer & Grammelspacher reacquired the Diana brand name in 1984, so the use of the Original brand then appears to have ceased. Fast-forward 30 years and the company was taken over by German Sport Guns GmbH (GSG) after a successful history spanning over 120 years, including the major post-war challenges described previously. Fast-forward again to 2019, and my eldest grandson graduated from his beloved Daisy BB airgun to a new Diana Model 240 Classic air rifle, so our family tradition continues. ●



This sketch of the Giss recoilless system, adapted by Original and used on its rifles and pistols, shows the part-cocked state

ALPHA WOLF



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SAFARI EDITION

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dressed
to impress:
THE WORLD'S
MOST ADVANCED
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Model illustrated equipped with
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Copperhead scope

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- Latest firmware with factory-set power profiles
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 - 15% increase in maximum power available
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 - OEM Huma-Air regulated fitted as standard
- Compact 'monocoque' (one-piece) alloy chassis
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- Large capacity and 'twinable' self-indexing magazine
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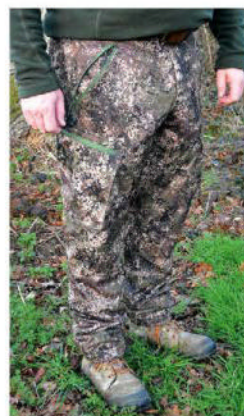
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Mike



62 Alpha Wolf Safari Edition

Get a handle on the latest incarnation of Daystate's flagship electronic PCP



68 Ridgeline Ascent Pants

These softshell hunting trousers are just what you need



70 BSA Scorpion TS

Phill Price reckons very latest PCP from BSA is an absolute bargain



74 Hawke Frontier LRF

The dual-role Hawke Frontier LRF offers an alternative to binos and rangefinders



76 Action Sport Schofield

Enjoy a piece of Wild West history in the shape of ASG's pellet-firing six-shooter



78 QYS Domed .177

Mike Morton revisits these high-end pellets to see whether much has changed



KEY SPECS



MAKER: Daystate (daystate.com)
MODEL: Alpha Wolf Safari Edition
PRICE: £2,400
TYPE: Pre-charged pneumatic
OVERALL LENGTH:
 722mm (24.4 in)
BARREL LENGTH: 430mm (17 in)
AIR RESERVOIR CAPACITY: 480cc
WEIGHT (UNSCOPED):
 3.35kg (7.4lbs)
CALIBRE:
 .177 (4.5 mm) and .22 (5.5 mm)
COCKING:
 Sidelever action, reversible
MAGAZINE CAPACITY:
 13 shots in .177, 11 shots in .22
FILL PRESSURE: Up to 240 bar
FAC MUZZLE ENERGY:
 20 ft-lb in .177, 45 ft-lb in .22
TRIGGER: Electronic release
ADJUSTABILITY: Pull weight, length
 of stage and blade position
SAFETY: Manual, electronic
 isolation. AR-15-type lever
STOCK: Textured wood
OPTIONS: PRS accessories, 0dB
 silencer, Aim Grip bipod

With the SWAT on top, the Safari Edition offers neutral balance and is light enough to be nimble, but heavy enough to be stable in the aim



Daystate is a company that loves to create and innovate. It's now known the world over for its electronic rifles, most recently the Red Wolf, Delta Wolf and Alpha Wolf. Now the pack has expanded yet again with the addition of the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition.

Readers will probably be familiar with the regular Alpha Wolf – if indeed 'regular' is a word that can be justifiably applied to a supergun like this. But the Safari Edition brings some fairly significant changes that will directly affect the form and indirectly affect the function of Daystate's pack leader.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Anyone who has been following Daystate's recent releases will know that the word 'Safari' means this bullpup comes with a unique type of ambidextrous wooden stock, being very heavily textured all over, with plenty of stippling on the pistol grip.

We've all heard the term 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', and to be honest, when I first heard about the Safari stock I wasn't convinced.

IT COMES WITH A UNIQUE TYPE OF AMBIDEXTROUS WOODEN STOCK

Then I saw one. And then I held one. You may disagree with me on this, but I think there's a purposeful and practical elegance to this stock, and it's a world away from the red and grey laminated stock of the standard Alpha Wolf, also nice but so different.

Having such a rough texture means that the stock will offer you plenty of grip, however you choose to take hold of it, and there's an added benefit, which I've thankfully not had to put to the test, in that a bump, dent or missing sliver of wood due to some rough or careless handling will be far less likely to be noticed.

It's not all about the stock, though, as the monocoque chassis has been bronze-anodised this time, compared with the all-black finish of the metalwork on the standard Alpha Wolf. This makes the two seemingly identical Wolves very different beasts, and also means that we get more of



RIFLE TEST ALPHA MALE

Mike Morton gets a handle on the latest incarnation of Daystate's flagship electronic PCP, the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition



Both the scope rail and cheekpiece sit on a dovetail rail, meaning they can be adjusted forwards and backwards for perfect gun fit

The rough finish on the woodwork may be likened to the bark of a tree or a piece of driftwood, but it's handsome very practical

The Alpha Wolf Safari Edition comes equipped with an adjustable post-and-shoe match-style trigger as standard

what we like best when it comes to airgun shooting – choice.

INCLUSIONS AND EXTRAS

Daystate has teamed up with Precision Rifle Systems, which produces a range of optional accessories for the Alpha Wolf and other rifles, with the most useful PRS items here probably being an adjustable butt plate with a monopod and rear bag rider. It's no surprise to learn that just like the regular Alpha

What you do get with the rifle is one of Daystate's new fold-down gated magazines, which takes 13 pellets in .177 calibre and 11 in .22. No single-shot adapter is included, but one is available, again from PRS, as an extra for £75. Like the magazine, it can be inserted from either side of the action.

Also included are two small hex keys for adjusting the trigger, an extended Foster fill-connector and a Dowty seal. The fill point itself is

recessed fairly deep inside the belly of the stock, hence the need for the lengthened Foster connector that we first saw with the Red

Wolf. The fill point does not have one of Daystate's new magnetic snap-on covers, but that's because it sits so deep it's unlikely to get dirty. However, a cover is available from PRS for those shooters wanting a belt-and-braces approach to air fill cleanliness. A battery charging cable and plug are also included, and everything comes in a hard case.

FAC variants of the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition are available, offering extra calibre options in addition to



The safety catch can be operated from either side, and Mike found it easiest to thumb it to 'fire' with his shooting hand

the .177 and .22 of the sub-12 ft-lb models. This review will focus on the standard sub-12 variant, with the rifle on loan to me being .177. The Alpha Wolf has calibre-swap functionality, but I stuck to the configuration in which the rifle was supplied, and to be honest I expect that's how the majority of owners will leave theirs.

The test rifle came supplied with a OdB Long moderator with a black finish, which costs £164, but you could fit any moderator of your choosing because the shroud has the standard 1/2in UNF thread. Having said that, the OdB Long really looks the part, accentuating the aesthetics of this handsome rifle, at least in my eyes, and better yet it did a superb job of quietening down the muzzle crack.

One thing I really like about the rifle is the fact that the foam in the hard case has been cut so the rifle will fit inside with a scope on top. There are also plenty of additional cut-outs for storing other items in the case, such as a recess for the charger, one that can take two magazines and another for a spare Li-Po battery. With the OdB Long attached, the rifle would no longer fit in the case, but I have a OdB Short, so fitted this instead.

“THE ONBOARD COMPUTER WILL MAKE ADJUSTMENTS FROM SHOT TO SHOT”

Wolf, the Safari Edition is not a cheap rifle, coming in at £2,400 for the standard sub-12 ft-lb version.

You can order one that's already been kitted out with the full range of PRS accessories. This comes in at £2,700, which represents an overall saving of around £200 if the components were to be bought individually. Either way, nobody would argue that this is quite a bit of money, but as we go on I'll explain how that money will be spent.

Because the rifle is electronic, all the sidelever and drop-down handle have to do is chamber the pellet and cycle the magazine

Daystate has incorporated a chronograph into the barrel shroud, providing important data which is processed by the onboard computer



As well as this Picatinny rail, you'll find more rails either side of the action and beneath the butt for fitting a monopod, bipod and other accessories

The Safari Edition accepts Daystate's new gate-loading magazines, which can be stuck together magnetically and used as a pair

Noise reduction naturally takes a slight hit by using a shorter moderator, but if this rifle was mine I'd keep the OdB Short on the rifle, as it now fits in the hard case perfectly. There is an additional cut-out in the foam for a longer moderator, but you will have to unscrew it each time.

GETTING STARTED

A quick-start guide is included, which gives you all the info you need to get up and running safely and effectively as soon as possible. However, a more detailed guide can be accessed by scanning the QR code that's printed on the quick-start document. This system not only saves paper, it ensures the version the user is reading is the most up-to-date one available. I downloaded a version to my phone so I could keep it to hand when I was at the range, and also made a copy that I sent to my PC so I could read it at home at my leisure.

Because it's an electronic rifle, the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition needs a battery, and in this case it's a Li-Po (lithium polymer) rechargeable stick-type. Daystate advises the user to ensure that the battery is fully charged before the rifle is used for the first time.



Daystate's electronic trigger offers plenty of adjustment for the position of the blade and for refining the first and second stages

Charging is in situ using the USB-C power cable and UK-standard wall plug that come in the case. Being USB-C, you don't need to worry about the orientation of the cable, which plugs into the battery compartment via a cut-out in the wooden stock. With the cable attached and the power supply turned on, you'll see a battery charging indicator appear on the touchscreen display.

One of the key features of this rifle is the fact that it can be tuned electronically, but I initially kept well away from that side of things as I wanted to see what the rifle could do out of the box.

LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL

The Alpha Wolf Safari Edition is a relatively compact little bullpup, measuring 722mm (24.4 in) in length and having a barrel length of 430mm (17in). With its 480cc carbon-fibre-wrapped buddy bottle up front, it weighs 3.35kg (7.4lbs) unscoped. The test rifle was supplied with an MTC 12x50 SWAT Prismatic scope on top, and while wearing this optic the point of balance was immediately underneath the trigger guard.

Whoever set up this rifle at the factory did a great job – I only needed to lower the butt pad a touch, as the adjustable cheekpiece and Mohawk-style scope rail were already perfectly positioned for me. One complaint of bullpups is that they can sometimes be slab-sided and top-heavy, but the Safari Edition showed no inkling to roll over onto its side. The scope rail even has a built-in bubble level to ensure the rifle's being held level.

The ART barrel is clad in a very attractive carbon-fibre shroud, but the track from the muzzle is quite noticeable and I suspect most Safari Edition owners will want to add a moderator as previously discussed. However, the barrel shroud has an even better trick up its sleeve.

THE TOUCHSCREEN

The Alpha Wolf contains a built-in chronograph that displays the muzzle velocity in feet per second (fps) when the rifle is fired. This clever feature is practical too, as the rifle has a digitally controlled Huma-Air regulator and the onboard computer will make adjustments from shot to shot to ensure that velocity is consistent.

I shot a few different types of pellets, and when swapping from one type that was significantly different to the last, the rifle would make some internal adjustments. This resulted in quite different muzzle velocities. After a few shots, once the rifle had 'trained' itself to work with the new pellet type, the spread in muzzle velocity really tightened up to within around 2fps, which is an absolutely superb result.

As mentioned, the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition seen here is a standard sub-12 ft-lb version, and while it doesn't have the full range of adjustability of an FAC or export version, there are still a number of areas that can be tweaked by the user.

I won't explain how to carry out each step, as that can be found in the manual, but three main areas that can be tinkered with are 'power', which can be tweaked from 70% to 100%, the number of microseconds the hammer opens the valve for, 1,980 being the maximum, and the voltage, 69.0 being the maximum.

“THIS IS ANOTHER RIFLE THAT I WOULD DEARLY LOVE TO BE ABLE TO KEEP”

While I shot several types of ammo for my accuracy testing, which I'll discuss later, I stuck to just one type, Rangemaster Sovereign, when making incremental adjustments to these three main settings.

This was because I wanted the only variables to be the electronic settings, and not the ammunition. I won't bore you by cataloguing the exact details, but I found the rifle to be very accurate regardless of the power level that I selected – and this is very good news for the close-range ratters and garden plinkers among us.

However, I ended up leaving both the hammer duration and voltage settings on maximum in order to achieve the greatest accuracy. Other pellet types may well benefit from different settings to these, but it's a matter of just a few seconds of work with the touchscreen to make changes to any of these variables. The Alpha Wolf Safari Edition really is a tinkerer's paradise.

Other settings include a 'magazine shot count', which lets you set the



While the chunky shroud does provide some sound suppression, you'll almost certainly want to attach a moderator such as the OdB Short or OdB Long models



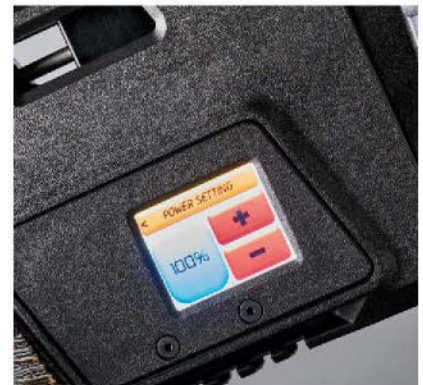
A supplied USB-C lead plugs into the battery compartment that's accessed via the cutaway in the thumbhole stock for easy charging



In 'night mode', the screen changes to a more subdued black background with red characters to reduce glare and help preserve your night vision



With the screen in programming mode, the shooter can tweak a multitude of settings such as voltage, as seen here



The touchscreen on the sub-12 ft-lb Alpha Wolf can display details of power, hammer, voltage and regulator pressure

number of shots for the calibre of magazine you are using, 13 in the case of the .177 test rifle, and whether or not you want to double the number if you are using magnetically paired magazines, which in this case would be 26. However, I kept things simple and did most of my shooting with a single magazine, and so set the shot count to 13.

In use, the screen will helpfully display the number of remaining shots, and should you try to take an extra shot – a 14th in my case – the rifle will gently vibrate as a reminder to refill the magazine or swap it for a fresh one.

Then there's 'night mode', which gives you the ability to substitute the black-on-white illumination for a far more subdued red-on-black. This is good because red light will help preserve your natural night vision, and it also won't show up as much in the dark, therefore making you less visible to your nocturnal quarry.

Finally there is the 'backlight settings' mode, which lets you change the level of brightness and the number of seconds the screen stays lit.



Thanks to the heavily textured stock and stippled pistol grip, the Safari Edition feels as if it's been stuck to your hands

All in all, these settings should prove very useful and can be adjusted quickly to match the type of shooting you are about to do.

ACCURACY AND HANDLING

Due to the ergonomics and balance of the rifle, shooting offhand in both the hunting and target stances was a breeze. With my leading hand forward, the Picatinny bipod rail was resting in the palm of my left hand, but luckily this did not feel uncomfortable at all.

Shooting off sticks was also a real pleasure, as I was able to rest the buddy bottle into the Vee of my Primos Trigger Stick while nudging the tip of the forend against the yoke, bracing the rifle firmly.

I did run into a few problems when trying to shoot the rifle off bench bags as well as shooting prone off a bipod, simply because the butt is not as deep as a conventional rifle and I found

myself struggling to properly support it. If the rifle was mine, I'd fit a monopod to the section of Picatinny rail that's under the butt to provide an instant fix.

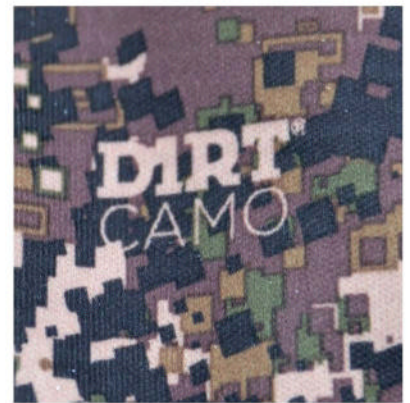
I shot several types of pellets through the Alpha Wolf Safari Edition, with most being decent, and Rangemaster Sovereign and Air Arms Diabolo Field being extremely good, delivering tiny 6mm groups at 30 yards and 10mm at 40.

Daystate's two-stage electronic trigger really lets you get the most out of this rifle, the cocking handle was simple to use, and I had no hiccups at all other than needing to spend a little bit of time getting used to the touchscreen and its various clever settings.

It's fair to say that this is another rifle that I would dearly love to be able to keep. Is it expensive? Yes. Does it represent value for money? Definitely. Would I buy one? If I had the money. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"This little bullpup manages to combine exquisite performance with excellent handling and tunability, and if you have the money to buy one of these magnificent rifles you won't be disappointed"



Ridgeline has named this digital camouflage pattern DIRT, and it looks good to Phill's eyes



The grid-pattern fleece on the inside of the trousers is comfortable and warm

ACCESSORY TEST ON THE ASCENT

Phill Price has found some hunting trousers that are just what he needs in the shape of the Ascent Softshell Pants from Ridgeline

Over the years I've found loads of shooting jackets that met my needs, but far fewer trousers. The ones I'd tried were either too hot or not warm enough, too baggy or too restrictive. So when I tried the Ridgeline Ascent Pants for a few days, my interest was raised. I wore them a couple of times in

KEY SPECS

SUPPLIED BY:
Highland Outdoors
(highlandoutdoors.co.uk)

MODEL: Ridgeline
Ascent Softshell Pants

PRICE: £109

dry, cold weather searching for squirrels, and realised that I had accidentally given them the highest of compliments, which was that I hadn't thought about them even once. I'd been warm enough without being overheated and never once restricted in movement.

These trousers tick many boxes. They're quiet as you walk, with no rustling noises to give you away.

The term 'softshell' has been mightily abused over the years, but the Ridgeline fabric is truly worthy of the name as it's comfortable to wear, being soft to the touch and highly stretchy in use.

The cut of the trouser is a little baggy, but there are no points for fashion sense when hunting. What matters to hunters like me is that you can move freely, even in the most extreme positions, without your trousers restricting you from getting to where you need to be to make that shot count.

SOFT AND SMOOTH

The fabric is soft and smooth on the outside, while being a grid fleece texture on the inside. I questioned my contact at the UK importer, Highland Outdoors, to ask if this fabric really did contain a membrane between the two fabrics, and he assured me that it did. I was truly surprised, because most old membrane softshell fabrics were about as stretchy as a suit of armour and nothing like this.

The camouflage pattern is called DIRT and is a kind of digital design, being a mixture of angular shapes



Water just beaded on the surface of the softshell rather than being absorbed by the fabric, keeping Phill nice and dry



All the pockets feature waterproof zips, which is a real plus point when operating in damp or wet conditions

overlaid to confuse the eye of our quarry. Of course it's hard to know just how well any camo pattern works, but I've felt confident wearing digital designs over the years and this one is no different.

I'm impressed at how well thought-out the pockets are. The main ones are very deep, reducing

The leg cuffs have fasteners so that you can tighten them to keep out the very worst weather

the chance of anything falling out when you're sitting, especially if that's on the ground. They also zip shut for full security. On the thighs are large cargo pockets, which also zip closed, and very useful they are too. All the zips are the waterproof kind. Interestingly, there are no rear pockets, perhaps because the designers know hunters often sit for long periods and don't use rear pockets. The cargo pockets are far more accessible when sitting.

“I LIKED THESE TROUSERS A LOT AND AM HAPPY TO RECOMMEND THEM TO YOU”

The front pockets serve a second very useful function, which is that when you get too hot, opening the

A TOUGHER TEST

zips allows air to circulate, aiding cooling. By the way, opening the fly zip helps too, but please remember to close that one before you leave your shoot! I first saw this 'mechanical ventilation' idea in mountaineering trousers, and it seems to have spread far and wide from there. It's a fact that waterproof clothing holds hot, damp air inside, no matter what the fabric is, so being able to vent some heat away is just what you need.

on the surface rather than being absorbed by the fabric, so I'm confident that these will keep you dry even in the wettest weather.

I also was able to feel that they are indeed windproof, having sat still in a delightful, freezing northerly for a couple of hours. In the very worst conditions you can use the leg fasteners to seal off the cuffs at the ankles, but I preferred to leave them undone to allow a little air to circulate for better comfort.

This is clearly not an inexpensive product, but the best things always cost more and I feel that the price reflects the performance fairly. I'd happily pay the asking price to be warm, dry and comfortable because ultimately that makes you a better hunter. If you're cold and wet, you'll soon go home. If you're comfortable you'll stay in the field and more chances will come your way. I liked these trousers a lot and am happy to recommend them to you. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

“These are the kind of hunting trousers I need for the cooler weather. Warm, comfortable and practical, with excellent camouflage and great freedom of movement, they get top marks from me”



RIFLE TEST A BRITISH WINNER

Phill Price gets his hands on the Scorpion TS, the very latest PCP from BSA, and reckons it's an absolute bargain

BSA Guns has a long and deservedly proud history of making guns right here in the UK, or more specifically in Birmingham. In recent years some of its production was moved overseas, but the good news is that much of it is coming home, which makes me happy.

BSA recently told me that the next new pre-charged pneumatic it would offer would be completely manufactured in England, and that is the rifle you see here – the Scorpion TS. What blows my mind is that not only is it a truly British gun, it's the entry-level, affordable model. Just £569 buys you a fine sporting rifle, made to high standards at a price you'd normally expect from a Chinese-made product.

Think about that. This is a low carbon footprint product, made by English hands in the very middle of our country. I'll confess, I simply couldn't see how they could do it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating as they say, so I hurriedly opened the box the courier threw near my front door and was happy to see the kind of product I have come to know and love from BSA.

SO MUCH FOR SO LITTLE

The configuration is the classic barrel-over-reservoir kind, and is all the better for it. My mind then went to how BSA could offer so much for so little, and I was struggling to see the answer. One small thing I noticed was that the bolt handle didn't wear the polished and anodised finish seen on the posher models, rather it had a textured coating, which seemed completely in keeping with a hard-working field rifle.

Next, I noticed that BSA has employed a synthetic stock that has appeared on several other models, and volume production reduces costs. Clever. Neither of these negatively affect performance, but do allow cost savings.

What cannot be seen is that BSA has re-engineered the structure of the action so that there are fewer parts, which means less metal is required, less machining time is needed and a quicker, more efficient assembly process is used. All this money saved means a more affordable gun for you and me.

KEY SPECS

MANUFACTURER: BSA Guns
(bsaguns.co.uk) 01675 481006

MODEL: Scorpion TS

TYPE: Pre-charged pneumatic

ACTION: Bolt action, magazine-fed multi-shot

LENGTH: 930mm

WEIGHT: 3.2kg

TRIGGER: Two-stage, adjustable

FILL PRESSURE: 232 bar

SHOTS PER FILL:
140 in both .177 and .22

PRICE: RRP £569



The ambidextrous cheekpiece can't be adjusted for height, but is well set up for most sensibly sized scopes

The modern action block is comprised of fewer parts than before, meaning less expense and less to go wrong

The pistol grip is steeply raked for extra comfort and control, aiding trigger technique and the TS's fine handling qualities

I looked in the travel case for the silencer and didn't find one. It turns out that the Scorpion TS doesn't come with one – for a very good reason. Many people own silencers already, and the male ½in UNF thread cut onto the barrel will accept any and all of them. If you're looking to save a few pounds, why would you need to buy another silencer when you own one already?

THE LOWEST CARBON FOOTPRINT PCP MADE IN ENGLAND TODAY

BARREL:
Made in Birmingham, England
BREECH BLOCK:
Made in Birmingham, England
PRESSURE CYLINDER:
Made in Birmingham, England
KNOCK OFF VALVE:
Made in Birmingham, England
HAMMER SPRING:
Made in Birmingham, England
TRANSFER PORT:
Made in Birmingham, England
TRIGGER ASSEMBLY:
Made in Birmingham, England
SYNTHETIC STOCK:
Made in Dudley, West Midlands
PACKAGING:
Made in Birmingham, England

This is where I feel that this is BSA helping those on a budget buy British. I took the VC silencer off my old R-10 MK2 and put it on the Scorpion, a job that took all of 30 seconds, and I can swap it back in just as little time when I need to.

Going against the current trend, it should be noted that this rifle does not have a regulator, and I see nothing wrong with that. Fewer parts means reduced cost, and many of us have hunted with non-regulated guns for decades with no regrets, compromises or worries, so I don't see the regulator omission in any negative way.



Look at what it says – Made In England!

“THIS MAKES IT VERSATILE, BEING ADAPTABLE TO ALMOST ANY SITUATION”

Even at this price, the Scorpion TS still has the world-renowned cold hammer-forged barrel. Interestingly, I learned recently that a major German pellet manufacturer uses BSA guns as test vehicles, which says a lot about the respect people have for BSA guns, and perhaps more importantly the barrels.

With the obligatory trip to the chronograph taken care of, this brand-new gun was varying just 7 feet per second (fps) over a 20-shot

string, driving BSA's own .177 Gold Star pellets at 765fps for a muzzle energy of 11.23 ft-lb. If you're such a good shot that 7fps affects your shot placement, then you're a much better shooter than me.

A regulated gun might have a smaller variation, but not much. Now some will bring up the subject of a 'power curve' and I'm sure they're right, but you don't need to be very bright to learn the sweet spot in your PCP's power curve/reservoir pressure relationship to get 40 or 50 of your shots spot on – and show me any hunter or HFT competitor who needs more than that. I like simple guns: they suit me.

ERGONOMICS

As mentioned, we've seen this stock before on a number of models and I like it. I feel that its design is more about ergonomics and less about looking flashy because it fits me well. The near-vertical pistol grip is a good hand-filling shape that delivers my finger nicely to the trigger blade, which is a real aid to accurate shooting. I also appreciate the slim overall shape, which is just how a sporting rifle should be in my view.

This makes it versatile, being adaptable to almost any situation. As is the case with the vast majority of rifle stocks, the cheekpiece is a little low for scope use, but adding one



Unsurprisingly, the Scorpion TS is equipped with one of BSA's famous cold hammer-forged barrels

The muzzle is threaded the standard 1/2in UNF so you can fit a moderator of your choice

A port-and-probe filling system lives at the front of the air reservoir, which has a standard working pressure of 232 bar

Having the trigger guard built into the synthetic stock saves on the part count, while also offering perfect functionality

The bolt handle wears a textured coating while the safety is on the left, as usual with many BSA rifles

offering adjustable height is very expensive and would make no sense here. Another simple but clever design is that the trigger guard is an integral part of the stock, eliminating another component without compromising function, and I think it looks good too.

One neat little improvement I noted from older models is that you no longer need to slide a lock forward to release the magazine. The mag is held in by a magnet, eliminating a step in the loading process and making life just that little bit easier. Another improvement over older models is that the numbering on the magazine's drum is now painted in bright white that even I can see.

The small yellow dot still appears in the faceplate to indicate that the magazine is empty, but it's not as easy to see with my bad eyesight. In use, the new mag is the same as the old. You drop in a pellet and then rotate the drum to expose a new chamber, drop in a second pellet and then repeat, which is easy and simple once you've done it a couple of times.

The reservoir is filled with a port-and-probe setup at the front of the gun. A rotating collar vitally keeps any dirt or grit away from the port, providing we do our part and remember to close it after every fill. In front of this we find the pressure gauge, which isn't everybody's

favourite position, but it need not be a problem if you use it sensibly.

PELLET ON PELLET

As we'd expect, the trigger is two-stage and adjustable, and mine came set at a pleasant weight with just a little creep in the second stage. The test gun was an early production unit and I've fed back my findings to the factory. Despite that small criticism, I have to say that it made no difference to the accuracy as it was simply superb. At 25 yards it was almost pellet on pellet, making such neat little holes in the target cards that I couldn't wish for more, all from an entry-level gun. If you miss a shot with this gun, the problem was you!

As ever, the manual safety is on the wrong side for right-handed shooters, but no big deal to disengage in most situations. I like the fact that it blocks the trigger movement so that you know in an instant when you've left it on by accident. As your finger touches the blade, you can feel your error and take appropriate action quickly before your quarry runs away.



Having the pressure gauge here isn't everybody's favourite, but it is practical and simple nevertheless

A key indicator that this is a gun designed to be used in the field is shown by one small, but very important feature. It will come with sling swivel studs as standard. No hunter in their right mind carries a rifle in their hands for four hours. We all fit a sling, and having the studs factory-installed is a lovely thing, very telling of how the designers understand their customers' needs. It can't cost much to add this feature, and I wish more manufacturers would fit them too. Drilling holes in a new gun isn't fun, so having them fitted for you is what you want.

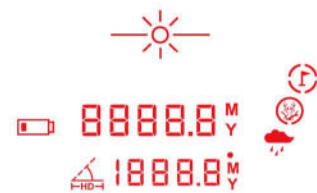
In conclusion, this superb rifle has all the performance any hunter could want in a great-handling package. It's tough, durable and designed to take the knocks that all guns suffer in the field and still keep going without spoiling its good looks. I also really appreciate the handling, which is spot on for a modern sporter and all this comes at a truly affordable price.

If that wasn't enough, knowing that every part was built right here at home is surely the icing on the cake. This is going to be a big seller for BSA, of that I'm sure. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"Being able to buy a rifle of this quality for such a small amount of money is great, but that gun being made in England too is something else!"

The Frontier LRFs have a good solid feeling in the hands, making them stable for rangefinding duties



All the information you need, including distance and angle readouts, is clearly displayed in the LCD display

FIELD TEST

THE FINAL FRONTIER?

Phill Price loves binoculars and rangefinders, and wonders if the dual-role Hawke Frontier LRF could provide what he needs

As a keen hunter I'll take advantage of anything that makes me more successful, which usually means helping me find my quarry and place my shots accurately. However, I dislike carrying too much kit as I feel it weighs me down and feels clumsy when I'm covering difficult terrain. Also, things that clank together will surely give you away to quarry alert to the presence of predators.

Binoculars are a must-have item for me on any hunt, and I literally never go without them. By moving less and looking more, I can find squirrels high in the trees long before they see me, and it gives me more time to make a plan of attack. I've also learned that a laser rangefinder is invaluable to me. This is because the highly curved trajectory of our

KEY SPECS

MANUFACTURER: Hawke Sport Optics (hawkeoptics.com)

PRICE: £999

MODEL: Frontier LRF

SPEC: 8x42

LENGTH: 165mm

WEIGHT: 999g

airgun pellets means that knowing the distance the quarry is away from me helps me make my mental calculations before pulling the trigger. As with using binoculars, I can't imagine going back to hunting without one.

I would instantly know if the shot was on or if a plan to get closer was the better decision.

EFFECTIVE KIT

Just such an optic sits on my desk as I write, in the form of the Hawke

Frontier LRF. This stands for 'laser rangefinding' binocular. I requested the 8x42 model, as I find the 10x ones too narrow in view for

close-range work. It wears tough green rubber armour, and comes with a choice of neck strap or a superb chest harness. The latter is easily my favourite way to carry. The case keeps them easily to hand while the harness means they cannot swing around and bash against your rifle or a farm gate. The case keeps the rain off the lenses too.

“I ONCE SUGGESTED THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE HOLY GRAIL OF HUNTING OPTICS”

Using both together as a team has proven well worthwhile for me, but wouldn't it be good if they could be combined? This would reduce the number of items to forget or drop, and perhaps more importantly, save time when our quarry is found. I could scan around with the bins, find the target and range it a second later.

In the hand, the LRF feels chunky and solid, with all of its controls moving with a nice resistance that speaks to its high-quality manufacturing. Happily for me, there are few controls, with the important ones being the large central focus wheel and the power/ranging button, both of which can be felt even through gloves.

The initial focus set-up is like nothing I've tried before, and I won't go into how that is done as it's better explained by the manual. Suffice to say, you need to focus the illuminated reticle and then the dioptre second. It took me a few goes, but once I got my head around it I really enjoyed the image quality.

Naturally, I immediately started rangefinding everything I could see from my back garden, from a big oak tree three houses down the road to people's TV aerials. I checked the information I was getting against some other rangefinders and was happy to see they agreed.

I noted, as I'd hoped would be the case, that it was easier to hold the reticle of the LRF on my target than with a pocket-sized rangefinder. Perhaps it's because I was using two hands or that the binocular is much heavier, stabilising it. Whatever the reason, the improvement was both noticeable and welcome.

FINE OPTICAL QUALITIES

Next, I set off to one of my permissions, scanning furiously for grey squirrels hiding deep in the woods and enjoying the fine optical qualities of the Frontier's lenses. The ability to see very clearly is pivotal to spotting them in deep shadow behind layers of twigs and a hundred other ways they can hide – and the LRF didn't disappoint.

Another feature I use a lot is the 'angle' mode that, as the name suggests, tells us the incline angle to our quarry. This needs to be added into our mental calculation when composing any upwards shot. I won't go into why here, as it's an often misunderstood subject. Suffice to say, as the angle gets steep, correction to your aim point must be made if you want to hit the mark. The LRF displays that boldly in your view the second you ping the target along with the range, so again you have the valuable information that you need for success instantly.



Rubber lens covers are supplied, but if you use the chest pouch and harness then they're not really needed

It also features five other modes that are easy to select, but for my hunting the angle mode was by far the most useful. I was glad to see that a common size of battery, the CR2, was employed, making getting replacements simple. Two batteries are supplied, so it'll be a long time before you need a new one.

Some hunting accessories are fun, some nice to have, while others like the Frontier LRF are a tool for success. Having a two-in-one setup saves time and reduces the things you need to carry, while delivering a great image and truly useful information. I once suggested that this might be the Holy Grail of hunting optics and think that I might just have been right. ●



Rubber armour protects the mechanism while adding grip, which is a real benefit for the hunter



This is by far the best way to carry binoculars, keeping them dry and stopping them from swinging around



The controls are big enough to be used with gloved hands, which is vital for a hunting optic

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"If you're serious about becoming an airgun hunter then take a look at this innovative binocular. Having a rangefinding feature built in saves time and makes accurate shot placement just so much easier"



GUN TEST

THE GUN THAT (PROBABLY) WON THE WEST

Phill Price enjoys a piece of Wild West history in the shape of the pellet-firing Schofield six-shooter from Action Sport Games

I won't pretend to be an authority on American history, but I thought that the Colt Single Action Army 'Peacemaker' was the 'gun that won the West' – but it seems that the Smith & Wesson Schofield has a good claim too.

It looks to me that the Schofield was more advanced than the Colt, so definitely of interest to those who love to collect such replicas. The key difference between the two was their loading methods, where to me the Schofield appears head and shoulders better. It featured what they call a 'top-break' action, where the top strap of the frame has a lock that when opened reveals all six of the chambers. An extractor then drives empty cases from the chambers, making them ready to accept fresh rounds.

This is a world away from the gate-loading Colt that could only manually eject one empty case and take one new round at a time. The criticism of the Schofield was that it was more mechanically complex, a point that's hard to argue in an environment where a gun failure might cost you your life.

My sample of the Schofield came in a battle-worn black finish, cleverly

KEY SPECS

DISTRIBUTOR:

Sports Marketing
(sportsmk.co.uk)
01206 795333

MANUFACTURER:
Action Sport Games

MODEL: Schofield

PRICE: RRP £179.99

LENGTH: 320mm

WEIGHT: 1035g

TRIGGER:
Single-action

POWER SUPPLY: 12
gram CO2 capsule

EXTRAS: 25 Ultraair
capsules £13.99,
Snowpeak wadcutter
pellets £5.99

abraded so as to look like a revolver that has seen some action.

Accompanying this is a set of plastic grips with a fake wood finish that's so convincing that I had to remove one to look inside to be sure of what they're made from.

They enclose the frame where the 12g CO2 capsule is contained. I really like the 4mm hex driver that's permanently attached inside the removable grip, and this is what's

used to drive the capsule onto the piercing spike.

NOSE-FIRST

Pellets are loaded into the dummy cartridges by pressing them nose-first into the soft sealing material that's in the base, where the primer would be in a live-fire cartridge.

With all six filled, they can be dropped back into the cylinder, and with the gas capsule engaged,



Under the grip we find the power source, which is a 12g CO2 capsule, as well as the piercing screw hex key that's attached to the grip so it won't get lost

closing the frame makes the revolver 'hot' and ready to fire.

The soft material in the base of the cartridges serves two roles. One is to hold the pellet in place as the cartridge is being handled, with the other being to effect a seal from the gas port on the frame to the base of the cartridge.

On the top of the frame, right behind where the hammer pivots, ASG has added a neat little button that pushes forward for 'safe' and back to 'fire'. This blocks the hammer from being cocked, so is very safe indeed and takes nothing away from the revolver's replica appeal. It's also ergonomically excellent, being easy to use from the firing position while on aim. In line with the replica value this gun offers, ASG has given each one a unique serial number, a feature collectors will love.

Being of an all-metal construction, the Schofield has a real heft in the hand. It brought back memories of the days when we could shoot such handguns in the UK. Being single-action, the hammer needs to be manually cocked for each shot. This movement also indexes the cylinder to align the next chamber with the hammer and barrel.

RUDIMENTARY SIGHTS

Guns from this era had rudimentary sights, and the Schofield deviates not one bit from that rule. The rear notch is a shallow V-shape cut into the top strap latch, while the front sight is a very shallow, flat-topped, convex bump. This is perhaps an area where we might choose to modify the battle-worn finish. Adding some colour to it would, without question,



As the cylinder rotates forward, the ejector lifts the cartridges from each of the six chambers



In this shot we can see the safety, the hammer spur and the fixed rear sight notch



Pellets are loaded by pressing them into the base of each dummy cartridge case, as seen on the left

“THIS IS A VERY INTERESTING REPLICA, AND IT'S LOADS OF FUN TO SHOOT AS WELL”

make aiming easier – but isn't that the whole point of a historical replica? If you want the whole experience, challenging sights are part of the game.

Greatly aiding accurate shooting is the excellent trigger. It's light, short and clean, and is an exemplary example of just what a trigger can be. Surely this is a big factor in the accuracy I observed. The Snowpeak pellet provided by SMK is very

modestly priced, so we should not expect Olympic-standard accuracy, but 1in groups from six yards are very enjoyable from my experience, and no tin can on the lawn could possibly be safe from this combination in my view.

I contacted ASG and asked about the 'half-length rifled barrel' that was mentioned in their PR info. The reply stated: "As it suggests, only half of the barrel is rifled. The idea

to make it half-length was to provide a more stable and controlled shot for pellets over the original smoothbore barrels." There's even a fully rifled barrel upgrade option that takes this a step further and offers better stability and control for pellets.

This is a very interesting replica, and it's loads of fun to shoot as well. Plus it taught me a little bit of history that I didn't know before. What's not to like? ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"ASG has another winner on its hands with this beautiful replica revolver. Its action is great fun to use and backed up by top accuracy and a superb trigger. Definitely one to take a look at for every collector"

These pellets come in QYS's new gold tin with a screw-top lid, with the batch number and head size being printed on the bottom



PELLET TEST IN THE ZONE WITH THE DOME

Having shot very early examples of the QYS Domed, Mike Morton revisits these high-end pellets to see whether much has changed over the years

Qiang Yuan Sports, better known as QYS, has been making pellets since 1994, but it wasn't until 2018 that this

ammunition became readily available over here thanks to The Shooting Party. It's easy, if a little lazy, to dismiss anything coming from China as being nothing more than cheap and cheerful, but the whole QYS range, which so far is entirely .177 calibre, has proved itself to be among the very best on the planet, with plenty of Olympic and World Cup medals being won with QYS pellets.

While we've been enjoying these pellets in the West for the past five years, manufacturing processes can change over time, and the dies that produce these projectiles certainly wear out and need replacing, so I decided to revisit the range to see how 2023 QYS pellets compare with their original counterparts. QYS makes pellets of various names, weights, head sizes and head shapes, and the type on test here is probably

KEY SPECS

PELLET:
QYS Domed 8.48gr
MANUFACTURER:
Qiang Yuan Sports
(qiang-yuan.eu)
SUPPLIED BY:
The Shooting Party
(shootingparty.uk)
TYPE:
Domehead diabolo
CALIBRE: .177
ADVERTISED HEAD SIZE: 4.50mm
MEASURED HEAD SIZE: 4.51mm
LENGTH: 6.75mm
SUPPLIED IN:
Tin of 500
PRICE: £16.99
ADVERTISED WEIGHT: 8.48grains
MEASURED WEIGHT: 9.20 grains
USES: Target shooting, hunting, precision plinking

the most iconic, being the Domed, a classic domehead diabolo.

QYS Domed, an accurate if uninspiring name, is available in different formats, with the pellets on test here having an advertised weight of 8.48gr and head size of 4.50mm. They cost £16.99 per tin of 500, just under 3.4p each.

One change is the tin itself. Original batches of QYS pellets came in a clear plastic tub, which was a brilliant idea inasmuch as you

“THE QUALITY OF MANUFACTURE AND CONSISTENCY IS SUPERB”

could visually inspect the pellets without having to crack open the lid. Unfortunately, the tubs themselves were prone to actually cracking during transit, so QYS now uses a smart gold tin with a screw-on lid. They do not come with a protective foam disc, which is a shame, but nevertheless the contents of the entire tin that I was sent was undamaged and free of swarf.

These pellets are advertised as having a weight of 8.48gr, and as usual I put a sample of 50 over my digital scales. I was surprised to find that, at least according to my scales that may not be properly calibrated, the pellets were heavier than expected. But of far more importance, all 50 weighed exactly the same, this being 9.2gr. When I carried out this test back in 2018, the average measured weight was 8.4gr.

I decided to incorporate a new element into my pellet test regime, this being head size, using my Pelletgage measuring device. Again, the sample did not measure what was printed on the

bottom of the tin, which was 4.50, but again the entire sample was identical, all measuring 4.51mm. So as long as this diameter is right for your barrel, these pellets are utterly consistent, and consistent pellets mean consistent results.

TEST CONDITIONS

This test was carried out on a beautiful sunny spring day.



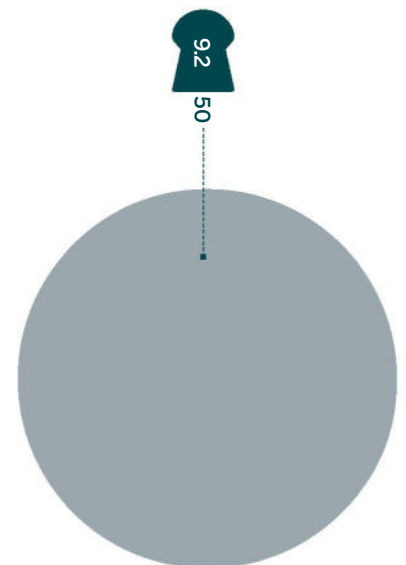
Mike's scales measure to one decimal place and may not be perfectly calibrated, but the sample weighed all came in at 9.2gr

TEST RESULTS ANALYSIS

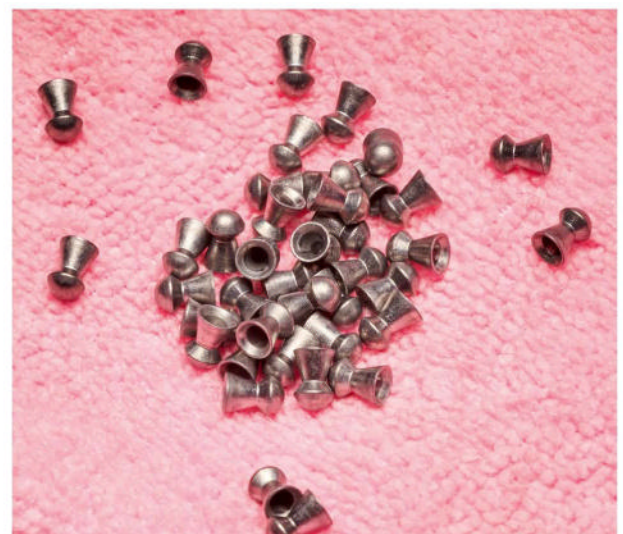


Mike measured the head size of these domeheads, and found them all to be an identical 4.51mm in diameter

WEIGHT CONSISTENCY



As is becoming the norm these days, the pellets were clean and undamaged, which is easy to check when poured onto a microfibre cloth



I'd had to bide my time before carrying out my testing, as prior to this we'd had day upon day of heavy rain and high wind. I made sure the sun had moved so it was not in my eyes before shooting commenced.

I used my Daystate Red Wolf, which has an MTC King Cobra F1 sitting on top, and this was cranked up to its highest setting of 24x, with the rig being shot off a bench supported by my super-stable Dog-Gone-Good bench bags.

DOWNRANGE

I knew the pellets were beautifully made and the Red Wolf is a dream to shoot, but as soon as I started chambering the Domed I also knew they would probably not play nicely with each other as the pellets were a loose fit in the breech. I ended up shooting the test targets at 20, 25 and 30 yards as any further than this was just too far, although I maintained my usual 30-yard zero.

Out at 20 yards, my five-shot group measured 3.6mm centre-to-centre, with me applying 5mm of holdunder. Back at 25 yards, the group opened up a touch to be 6mm centre-to-centre, with 9mm of holdunder required.

While still a great result, the target shows the five shots separating into two distinct groups.

At 30 yards the group was 10mm centre-to-centre, but as you can see in the accompanying image, this was due to one flyer. With that pellet taken out, group size measured just 5.3mm. When I shot the Domed further back, the number of flyers increased, so I concluded the test.

In this case, the flyers were not due to any discrepancy in pellet head size or weight, simply the fact that they were too loose for the bore of my particular rifle. The groups in my 2018 test prove how different dies do produce slightly different pellets, which is why serious target shooters go to great lengths to buy as many tins as they can from a particular batch. While these pellets weren't quite right for the rifle, there's no doubting the quality of manufacture and consistency, which is superb. ●

THE AIRGUN SHOOTER VERDICT

"With an identical head size and an identical weight, QYS Domed reign supreme in terms of manufacturing quality, and if they're the right match for your bore, you'll be a very happy shooter"

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FOR SALE: Falcon FN12 .22 cal Raptor 8 shot. Skeleton stock. Very good condition. 1x 8-shot mag, 1x 2-shot slider. £425. Andrew Goult (Barnsley). Tel: 07857 039410. Email: andrewgeorge89@icloud.com

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FOR SALE: Ruger Targis Hunter gas-piston break-barrel air rifle in .177. In factory condition in box. Single-shot, auto safety, front and rear sights, Picatinny rail, synthetic stock. 1132mm. £250. Sale for £150. Richard Hannaford (Hampshire). Tel: 023 9246 3822 or 07471 472619. Email: richardhannaford9@gmail.com

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FOR SALE: Weihrauch HW45 .22 in 'as new' condition. Max 50 shots fired, Ambidextrous walnut grip (hand-carved by Andy Davies), original 1911-style grips included, Vector Optics SCRD-1911 Frenzy 1x17x24 red dot sight, Vector Optics SCOT-05 recoil stopper, Nuprol/PARRA No 1709 Pangolin hard case. TLack of use forces sale. Happy to email photos of everything. Collection only. £400. Paul Thom (North Wales). Tel: 07921 627613. Email: cyclopsis@sky.com

FOR SALE: FX Wildcat MkIII .22 cal. Hardly used, so as new. Also comes with 2 x 16 shot mags, Huggett silencer and hard case. £900. **FOR SALE:** Brocock Bantam Sniper HR .22 cal. As new. Serviced end of Aug. Comes with Huggett silencer. £900. Stephen Bainbridge (Tyne & Wear). Tel: 07311 286630. Please text rather than ringing as I drive and can't answer.

FOR SALE: Brocock Ranger XR. Six months old. All the extra Weaver rails. £800. Stephen Hoult (Leicestershire). Tel: 07920 098400. Email: stephenhoult@outlook.com

FOR SALE: Weihrauch HW77 in .22 cal. Mint condition. Boxed. £295. Alice (Hertfordshire). Tel: 07979 692807. Email: alicekapo@yahoo.co.uk

FOR SALE: ASG Scorpion Evo airsoft rifle (not airgun). Immaculate. Unmodified. Three Hi-Cap magazines. Custom-fit Evo case. Two Lipo batts. £300. Mike Madell. Tel: 07748 228961. Email: michaelmadell@yahoo.co.uk

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FOR SALE: Pair of revolvers. Both C02 pistols. Both .177 cal. 1) Umarex SAA .45 replica nickel/pearl grips (plastic). 2) Umarex SAA .45 replica blue/walnut grips (plastic). BB (steel ball). Both together in a rigid revolver case with lock. Five years old, as new. Only fired about a dozen shots each. £240 with case. Chris Tasker (Lincolnshire). Tel: 07434 851275. Email: miztertea@gmail.com

FOR SALE: Weihrauch HW77K Green Laminate. In 177 cal. Hawke Sport HD 3-9x40 Mil Dot II Scope. Excellent condition. Plus gun bag and range mat. £450 ono. Anthony Griffiths (Herts). Tel: 07742 292208. Email: atg.bushy@yahoo.co.uk

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ROLLING OUT A CUSTOM

Phil Hooper takes a look at the relatively scarce Custom derivative of the BSA Supersport, a break-barrel from the 1980s

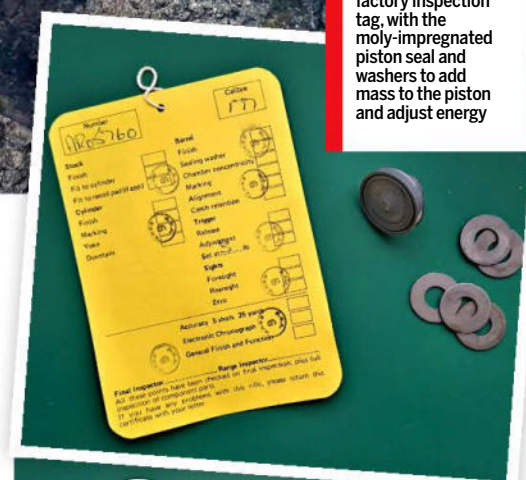
By the mid-1980s, BSA's adult-sized break-barrel air rifle, the Mercury, was getting long in the tooth. It had been uprated in Challenger form, but still was not able to compete head-on with Weihrauch's HW80 powerhouse.

Taking the Challenger cylinder and lengthening the piston stroke provided a basis for the power-pack of the Supersport, launched in 1986. Considerably lighter than the HW80, the Supersport could nevertheless deliver 11.5 ft-lb of muzzle energy, and rather more for the US market.

In 1987, the Supersport Custom was announced. This model differed from its humbler brother by having a deluxe stock with a prominent, hand-finished cheekpiece and chequering on the pistol grip. An adjustable barrel pivot, a two-stage trigger and a Maxi-Grip scope rail instead of dovetails finished the gun off nicely.

The rifle was 41.5in long with an 18.5in barrel and weighed a handy 6lb 12oz. Both models were available in .177, .22 and .25 calibres. Power was factory-regulated by the strength of the mainspring and the number of steel washers added to the piston to increase its mass. The piston had no centre rod, and the head/seal was an all-new design for BSA, being made of a nylon impregnated with molybdenum sulphide, rather than an O-ring on a nylon or steel piston head as for the Mercury. Both Supersport models had an articulated cocking lever, with the consequent benefit of a stronger stock forend and a manual safety.

The Supersport Custom photographed here is in .177 calibre. It delivers 10.5 to 11.5 ft-lb, depending on pellet choice, and offers excellent accuracy. Current BSA models, the Supersport SE and the Lightning, can both trace their origins to the 1980s Supersport models. ●



Accessories with the rifle included open sight risers to suit the raised cheekpiece, along with the usual Pyram pellets and pellet-catcher



As with any trigger-guard, this unit prevents accidental contact with the blade, but also shows off the unmistakable 'rolling wave' design

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